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Purdue University's Foundations of Excellence Final Report: A Roadmap for Excellent Beginnings

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PURDUE UNIVERSITY’S FOUNDATIONS OF EXCELLENCE

FINAL REPORT:
A ROADMAP FOR EXCELLENT BEGINNINGS

AUGUST 2012
We have high expectations for our University and our students.

To accomplish our strategic plan goals, we must remove institutional barriers that may hinder our students’ ability to achieve these goals.

In turn, students must be responsible for engaging in the programs that will help them succeed.
During the 2011-12 academic year, Purdue University engaged in an intentional, extensive, reflective, and systemic review of the experience of first-year students via the Foundations of Excellence® process. While Purdue’s first-to-second-year retention rate has improved significantly over the past few years (from 85 percent in 2007 to 90 percent in 2011), Foundations of Excellence looks well beyond the narrow focus on retention. Rather, it is a “comprehensive, externally guided self-study and improvement process for the first year” facilitated by the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education. Through this course of action, we have evaluated the first-year experience at Purdue with respect to the goals of enhancing learning, creating a solid foundation for personal and professional development, and building connections between entering students and the institution.

This work reflects the thoughts and contributions of hundreds of individuals from all areas of the Purdue campus. This group represented faculty, staff, and students; they came from all colleges and schools; and they included representatives from academics, housing, student affairs, athletics, financial aid, and most other offices that interact with our students. This report is critical to our choices in 2012, and also provides a reference point for future reflections on student success. We are thankful for all of the participants listed in this report and for their contributions to this comprehensive and reflective review.

When we have fully executed the action plan and share the critical importance of the foundation years with the Purdue community we will have students who:

- Have a solid academic foundation upon which to build
- Have a clear view of the value of education and their role in society
- Are engaged with faculty, ideas, and each other
- Appreciate and seek diversity of thought and experience
- Support the success of all students
- Have confidence built on competence
This report lays the groundwork for a new campus culture focused on excellent, intentional, and integrated curricular and co-curricular efforts for all students, according to their specific needs, so that they can achieve academic and personal success. In addition, it provides a blueprint for coordinating assessment and dissemination of findings to foster continuous improvement among the University’s overall student success efforts.

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CHRISTINE TAYLOR, Vice Provost for Diversity & Chief Diversity Officer

A. DALE WHITTAKER, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs

Purdue University is grateful to all those who have contributed to the Foundations of Excellence process. This effort has benefited from the participation of a broad assembly of individuals throughout the University community. We thank the faculty, staff, and students for their continued involvement, insights, expertise, and contributions to this worthy endeavor, with special thanks to the Office of the Provost and Office of the President.

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Associate Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs; Associate Dean, College of Pharmacy; & Head, Department of Pharmacy Practice

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Area Operations Manager, University Residences

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Dean of Students

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Associate Director, Transition and Success Programs, Student Access, Transition, and Success Programs

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FRANK DOOLEY
Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics & Provost Fellow

BRENT DRAKE
Assistant Vice Provost & Director, Enrollment Management Analysis and Reporting, Office of Enrollment Management

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
STEERING COMMITTEE continued

ZENEPHIA EVANS
Director, Multicultural Science Programs,
College of Science

BARB FRAZEE
Executive Director,
University Residences

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Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs

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Associate Dean, College of Engineering

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Associate Professor, Department of Psychological Sciences

VIC LECHTENBERG
Special Assistant to the President & Director, Center for Regional Development

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Director, Center for Career Opportunities

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Director, Strategic Initiatives and Assessment, Housing and Food Services

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Associate Dean, College of Science

SONG NO
Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts

JIM PUKROP
Senior Assistant Director & Coordinator,
Learning Communities, Student Access, Transition, and Success Programs

HEATHER SERVATY-SEIB
Associate Professor, Department of Educational Studies

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Assistant Vice President of Marketing Strategy and Research, Office of Marketing and Media

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Director, Residential Life, University Residences

JARED TIPPETS
Director, Student Access, Transition, and Success Programs

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Director, Discovery Learning Research Center

ANDREW ZEHNEN
Assessment and Data Analyst, Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs

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Co-Chair
Director, Residential Life, University Residences

VIC LECHTENBERG
Co-Chair
Special Assistant to the President & Director, Center for Regional Development

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Director, Center for Families & Director, Military Family Research Institute

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Graduate Student

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GREGORY SWITZER
Undergraduate Student & Purdue Student Government

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Undergraduate Student & President, Mortar Board
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Co-Chair
Associate Director, Transition and Success Programs, Student Access, Transition, and Success Programs

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Co-Chair
Associate Dean, College of Science

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Dean, College of Agriculture

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Student Leader, Student Access, Transition, and Success Programs

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Director, Hardware Services and Operations, Information Technology

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Instructor, Academic Success Center

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Advisor, Office of Health Professions Advising

SCOTT VANA
Associate Director, Advising, Undergraduate Studies Program

JANE KRAUSE
Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Pharmacy Practice

MARY BETH LENCKE
Academic Advisor, Undergraduate Studies Program

CLARENCE MAYBEE
Information Literacy Specialist, Libraries

CRAIG MILLER
Professor, Department of Computer Graphics Technology

MARYBETH MILLER
Course Coordinator, Department of Chemistry

PETER NIEMAN
Staff Resident, University Residences

CHRISTA PAZERA
Assistant Director, Residential Life, University Residences

MATTHEW PISTILLI
Research Associate, Academic Technologies, Information Technology

DIMENSION THREE: Learning

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Co-Chair
Dean of Students

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Co-Chair
Associate Professor, Department of Psychological Sciences

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Professor, Department of English & Director, Online Writing Lab

SAMANTHA BLACKMON
Associate Professor, Department of English & Director, Introductory Composition Program

MIKE CASSIDY
Continuing Lecturer, Burton D. Morgan Center for Entrepreneurship

BOBBY CHASTAIN
Academic Outreach, Hall of Music

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Continuing Lecturer, Department of Mathematics & Coordinator, Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces (ALEKS) Math Assessment

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Associate Professor, Libraries

BRENDA DOWNING
Continuing Lecturer, Academic Success Center

PETER EVERS
Undergraduate Student & Executive Director, Student Organizational Outreach, Purdue Student Government

CHRISTOPH HOFFMANN
Professor, Department of Computer Sciences

ERIC HOLLOWAY
Director, Instructional Laboratories, School of Engineering Education

JEFF KARPICKE
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychological Sciences

JANE KRAUSE
Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Pharmacy Practice

MARY BETH LENCKE
Academic Advisor, Undergraduate Studies Program

CLARENCE MAYBEE
Information Literacy Specialist, Libraries

CRAIG MILLER
Professor, Department of Computer Graphics Technology

MARY BETH LENCKE
Academic Advisor, Undergraduate Studies Program

CLARENCE MAYBEE
Information Literacy Specialist, Libraries

CRAIG MILLER
Professor, Department of Computer Graphics Technology

MARY BETH LENCKE
Academic Advisor, Undergraduate Studies Program

CLARENCE MAYBEE
Information Literacy Specialist, Libraries

CRAIG MILLER
Professor, Department of Computer Graphics Technology

MARY BETH LENCKE
Academic Advisor, Undergraduate Studies Program

CLARENCE MAYBEE
Information Literacy Specialist, Libraries

CRAIG MILLER
Professor, Department of Computer Graphics Technology

MARY BETH LENCKE
Academic Advisor, Undergraduate Studies Program

CLARENCE MAYBEE
Information Literacy Specialist, Libraries

CRAIG MILLER
Professor, Department of Computer Graphics Technology

MARY BETH LENCKE
Academic Advisor, Undergraduate Studies Program

CLARENCE MAYBEE
Information Literacy Specialist, Libraries

CRAIG MILLER
Professor, Department of Computer Graphics Technology

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Academic Advisor, Undergraduate Studies Program

CLARENCE MAYBEE
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Information Literacy Specialist, Libraries

CRAIG MILLER
Professor, Department of Computer Graphics Technology

MARY BETH LENCKE
Academic Advisor, Undergraduate Studies Program

CLARENCE MAYBEE
Information Literacy Specialist, Libraries

CRAIG MILLER
Professor, Department of Computer Graphics Technology

MARY BETH LENCKE
Academic Advisor, Undergraduate Studies Program

CLARENCE MAYBEE
Information Literacy Specialist, Libraries
DIMENSION FOUR: Faculty

STEVE ABEL
Co-Chair
Associate Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs; Associate Dean, College of Pharmacy; & Head, Department of Pharmacy Practice

JIM PURRO
Co-Chair
Senior Assistant Director & Coordinator, Learning Communities, Student Access, Transition, and Success Programs

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Undergraduate Student & Purdue Student Government

RATIKA DHURU
Undergraduate Student

BARBARA DIXON
Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts & Faculty Fellow

CRAIG DOBBINS
Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics

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Director, Continuing Education, School of Nursing

DANIEL LYBROOK
Associate Professor, Department of Leadership and Supervision

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Associate Dean of Students for Counseling, Office of the Dean of Students

KELLY O’BRIEN
Student Leader, Student Access, Transition, and Success Programs

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Interim Head, Department of English

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Associate Professor, Department of Management

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Professor, Department of Biomedical Engineering

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Head, Department of Educational Studies

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Professor, Department of Political Science

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Dean, College of Pharmacy

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Program Director, Meat Lab, Department of Animal Sciences

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Assistant Professor, Library Science

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Co-Chair
Director, Undergraduate Studies Program

HEATHER SERVATY-SEIB
Co-Chair
Associate Professor, Department of Educational Studies

SARA APPEL
Outreach Specialist, Higher Education, Department of Human Development and Family Studies

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Assistant Director, Office of Admissions

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Academic Advisor, School of Engineering Education

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Associate Professor, College of Liberal Arts

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Director, Diversity, College of Veterinary Medicine

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Associate Dean, College of Agriculture

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Assistant Dean of Students

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Associate Director, Office of Admissions

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Associate Director, Recruitment, College of Pharmacy

KATHY KROLL
Director, Academic Success Center

ELLIE LIN
Undergraduate Student

LEE MORRISON
Residential Life Manager, University Residences

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Associate Professor, Department of Animal Sciences

KELLY PISTILL
Academic Advisor, Krannert School of Management

JENNA SEABOLD
Senior Assistant Director, Student Access, Transition, and Success Programs

MARVIN SMITH
Senior Associate Director, Division of Financial Aid

ETHEL SWARTZENDRUBER
Senior Assistant Director, Student Access, Transition, and Success Programs

CHAD TUCHEK
Staff Resident, University Residences

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Director, Outreach, Office of Engagement

LEANN WILLIAMS
Director, Undergraduate Advising, Department of Agricultural Economics

TOYINNA WILSON-LONG
Supervisor, Operations, Intercollegiate Athletics & Assistant Director, Science Diversity Office, College of Science
DIMENSION SIX: All Students

ZENEPIAH EVANS
Co-Chair
Director, Multicultural Science Programs, College of Science

MICHAEL T. HARRIS
Co-Chair
Associate Dean, College of Engineering

MILAD ALUCOZAI
Undergraduate Student

CALEB BARKER
Undergraduate Student

ERIC DIETZ
Associate Professor, Department of Computer and Information Technology

RACHEL GREENE
Undergraduate Student

BOB HEITERT
Director, Administration, University Residences

BETH HOLLOWAY
Director, Women in Engineering Program

SHEILA HURT
Advisor, Undergraduate Studies Program

CONNIE KASPER BROPHY
Area Residential Manager, University Residences

SHARLEE LYONS
Coordinator, Student Employment Training, University Residences

CHRISTOPHER MUNT
Coordinator, Student Diversity Services, Diversity Resource Office

MEGAN NEAL
Undergraduate Student

TWILA ORTIZ
Immigration Counselor, Office of International Students and Scholars

JESSE RANEY
Associate Dean of Students & Director, Disability Resource Center

MELISSA ROBERTSON
Residential Life Manager, University Residences

YVONNE SMITH
Associate Director, Student Access, Transition, and Success Programs

RENEE THOMAS
Director, Black Cultural Center

MITCH WARREN
Senior Associate Director, Office of Admissions

JOY (TZU-YI) YANG
Graduate Student

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Co-Chair
Area Operations Manager, University Residences

SONG NO
Co-Chair
Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts

DAVID AYERS
Associate Dean, Office of International Programs

CAROL BEN-DAVIES
Assistant Dean of Students

MIKE BRZEZINSKI
Dean, Office of International Programs & Director, Office of International Students and Scholars

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ERIN DeROSA
Counseling Coordinator, HORIZONS

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Associate Professor, Department of History

JOSH LONG
Student Leader, Student Access, Transition, and Success Programs

PAMELA MORRIS
Assistant Dean & Director, Office of Multicultural Programs, College of Agriculture

SCOTT SECRIET
Assistant Director, Student Access, Transition, and Success Programs

BARBARA SOODEK
Continuing Lecturer, Academic Success Center

ANDREA R. WILLIAMS
Continuing Lecturer, College of Liberal Arts

KAREN YEHELE
Assistant Professor, School of Nursing
DIMENSION EIGHT: Roles & Purposes

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Co-Chair  
Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics & Provost Fellow

TIM LUZADER  
Co-Chair  
Director, Center for Career Opportunities

SABRINA BROWN  
Assistant Director, Student Access, Transition, and Success Programs

DEREK CAMP  
Undergraduate Student

SHAWN DONKIN  
Associate Director, Agricultural Research & Professor, Department of Animal Sciences

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Director, Certificate Program in Entrepreneurship

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Assistant Professor, Libraries

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Director, Minority Engineering Program

LINNETTE GOOD  
Assistant Director, Science Diversity Office

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Undergraduate Student & Student Representative, Indiana Commission for Higher Education

BRETT HIGHLEY  
Undergraduate Student & President, Purdue Student Government

PAM HORNE  
Associate Vice Provost for Enrollment Management & Dean of Admissions

BILL KRUG  
Associate Head, Department of Organizational Leadership and Supervision

MIKE LOEFFELMAN  
Assistant Director, College of Liberal Arts Honors Program

ANDREW LYBURN  
Assistant Director, Climbing and Challenge Education, Division of Recreational Sports

TED MALONE  
Executive Director, Division of Financial Aid

RICHARD RAND  
Professor, Patty and Rusty Rueff School of Visual and Performing Arts

SUZANNE SHAW  
Assistant Vice President, Marketing Strategy and Research, Office of Marketing and Media

JAIDEEP SINGH  
Graduate Student

GREGORY SWTIZER  
Undergraduate Student & Purdue Student Government

JEFF STEFANCIC  
Associate Dean of Students & Director, Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities

NANCY STEWART  
Academic Counselor/Career Counselor, Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences

DIMENSION NINE: Improvement

BRENT DRAKE  
Co-Chair  
Assistant Vice Provost & Director, Enrollment Management Analysis and Reporting, Office of Enrollment Management

GABRIELA WEAVER  
Co-Chair  
Director, Discovery Learning Research Center

LESA BEALS  
Senior Associate Registrar, Office of the Registrar

MELODY CARDUCCI  
Clerk IV, Office of the Registrar

KAREN CHANG  
Associate Professor, School of Nursing

AVSE CIPTCI  
Associate Professor, Department of Educational Studies

MAGGIE DALRYMPLE  
Associate Director, Office of Institutional Research

DAN DERFLINGER  
Senior Assistant Director, Office of Admissions

STEPHANIE DRAKE  
Business Analyst, Office of Student Analytical Research

ED EVANS  
Director, IT Infrastructure, Information Technology

KEN FIELD  
Area Operational Manager, University Residences

ALLY GOODRICH  
Director, Conferences, University Residences

LEE GORDON  
Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs

ANTWONE HAYWOOD  
Senior Assistant Director & Coordinator, Assessment, Evaluation, and Communications, Student Access, Transition, and Success Programs

JOHN HIGGINS  
Assistant Comptroller & Bursar

JACQUELINE HILLS  
Senior Assistant Director, Enrollment Management Communications, Office of Enrollment Management

P.K. IMBIE  
Director, Honors Program, College of Engineering

KEVIN MAURER  
Director, Strategic Initiatives & Assessment, Housing and Food Services

RAINDRA MUKERJEA  
Executive Director of Strategic Planning & Assessment

SARA RANDRIANASOLO  
Immigration Counselor, Office of International Students and Scholars

MADONNA RITTER  
Secretary V, Office of Enrollment Management

SUE WILDER  
Assistant Dean of Student Affairs

DERRICK WILLIAMS  
Student Success Coordinator, Science Bound

ANDREW ZEHNER  
Assessment and Data Analyst, Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs
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Purdue’s 2008-2014 strategic plan clearly articulates our goals as an institution — particularly those related to student success — as aspirational, but also achievable. The academic profile of incoming first-year students has steadily improved in the past few years. As one might expect with better-prepared students, the one-year retention rate of first-year students has steadily climbed in the past five years, from 85 percent for the 2006 cohort to 90 percent for the 2010 cohort. Moreover, the gap in retention rates between underrepresented minorities and the rest of the first-year cohort has narrowed from 8.3 to 2.9 percent. The increase in retention rates is eventually expected to drive up six-year graduation rates, which hover around 70 percent.

Despite this recent success, Purdue’s retention and graduation rates lag behind those of its peer institutions by two and 10 percentage points, respectively, suggesting there is more to be done. As an institution, we believe that these disparities are unacceptable and do not represent the full potential of our faculty, staff, and students. From distinguished professors to food service staff, graduating seniors to university vice presidents, and information technologists to academic advisors, we have the talent and resources to make a significant impact on the academic success, and therefore, the future, of every new student that matriculates at Purdue.

In 2011, Purdue recognized that we needed to change direction to reach our aspirational goals for student success. We have the ability to deliberately design the academic environment and student experience to greatly enhance learning, competence, confidence, and ultimately student success. Our commitment is to change what we do and how we do it.

The leadership of the four campus units with responsibility for many departments and programs with multifaceted levels of interaction with first-year students — Undergraduate Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Housing and Food Services, and Diversity and Inclusion — collaborated to jointly sponsor a yearlong study resulting in an action plan. Together, these campus leaders engaged the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education to facilitate a process of assessment and action. We quickly learned that Purdue and the Gardner Institute shared several key principles that made the process a good fit and an effective course of action.

1. THE FIRST YEAR MATTERS — it sets habits, expectations, and culture
2. ASPIRE TO EXCELLENCE — every assessment was against an international standard of excellence
3. THE TEAM MATTERS — all stakeholders were represented in the process by group members with credibility, a stake, and a voice
4. EVIDENCE-BASED ASSESSMENT — all deliberations were based on evidence that was collected from surveys, interviews, data and policy documents to support claims
5. ACTION-FOCUSED — all teamwork was focused on, and resulted in, an action plan that is owned and supported by all the participants — and designed to help us attain our aspirational goals

The overarching purpose of Purdue’s participation in the Foundations of Excellence process was to evaluate the first-year experience of new students at Purdue, and provide recommendations for institutional change and improvement. This report will help inform the campus community about the importance of a robust first-year experience, as well as the myriad successful support programs that have already been established and areas that require more development. In addition, we hope that future inquiries will find this work to be a stepping point for their evaluation. As such, we have been careful to provide footnotes citing key references and sources. While the process focused on evaluation of activities and programs at Purdue’s West Lafayette campus, the principles and findings can benefit Purdue system-wide.

The organization of the report is to first provide the task force’s conclusions and recommendations. Next, the Foundations of Excellence process is described, followed by an overview of Purdue’s strategic plan and a current snapshot of various Purdue programs aimed at first-year students. The main body of the report is dedicated to the vast amount of research, evaluations, and recommendations of the nine Dimension Committees.

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4 The task force recognizes that many of the hyperlinks in the footnotes may become inactive for future readers. That said, as of July 2012, all references were active. At a minimum, the footnotes will provide guidance to comparable information.
The Purdue University Philosophy Statement for the First-Year Experience below should guide Purdue in the creation and implementation of the undergraduate student experience.

At Purdue, we believe the first-year experience should enable students to build a solid foundation for success, not only at the University, but also throughout their lives.

Through learning experiences and support services, both in and beyond the classroom, students grow intellectually and develop personally. They acquire knowledge and skills to succeed academically, build confidence and resilience to accept and embrace challenges, and develop their personal and academic identity.

Students are welcomed into and expected to participate actively in a vibrant and intellectually challenging community within which all members feel a sense of belonging, irrespective of personal or group status, culture, or ethnicity. They share interests and activities with one another and learn to think, act, and remain openly respectful of diverse views and experiences.

Students are challenged to become globally prepared, interdependent, critical thinkers, with an ever-increasing ability to locate, assess, and apply knowledge resources that help them develop as whole, productive citizens and leaders on campus and beyond.

As a Purdue community, we hold ourselves accountable for providing experiences, support services, access to faculty and staff, and a safe learning environment whereby students can achieve these goals.

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**THEME 1**

**Specialized and Heightened Focus on the Experience of First-Year Students**

First-year college students face numerous challenges associated with their transition to college. There are adjustments with regard to academic expectations, learning a new system and environment, career refinement and development, and negotiation of interpersonal relationships with faculty, staff, roommates, new peers, and family members. This high level of adjustment warrants a significant and meaningful effort on the part of Purdue to provide appropriate support, guidance, and information.

**Responsibilities**

1. Support the implementation and expansion of the core curriculum to improve portability of courses across majors.
2. Ensure that every student has a consistent and coordinated first-year orientation course and the opportunity for a coordinated seminar experience.
3. Expand admit-to-university opportunities.

**THEME 2**

**Coordination of Curricular, Co-Curricular, and Academic Success Efforts for First-Year Students**

The decentralized nature of support programs and advising has led to a lack of a unified message and experience for first-year students. The disparity of programs, course offerings, support (such as tutoring or Supplemental Instruction), and advising experiences can lead to competing goals, resulting in confusion and frustration for students. Additionally, specific needs differ among student groups. This distributed model can lead to an uneven experience for students concerning advising, orientation-type courses, and success programs across campus.

**Responsibilities**

1. Coordinate undergraduate academic success programs.
2. Coordinate undergraduate academic advising in the first year.
3. Ensure appropriate availability of course spaces that allow students to make progress toward degree completion.
4. Develop programs targeted at removing disparities in success among identified groups of students.
5. Oversee the streamlining of communication to first-year students.

**THEME 3**

**Focus on an Environment of Improvement Based on Innovative Evidence-based Decision-making and Scholarship**

We believe that the recommendations above will result in significant improvement of the first-year experience of Purdue students. As a matter of course, and consistent with Purdue’s extensive research focus, all implemented recommendations must be closely monitored and carefully evaluated. A particular emphasis should be placed on the assessment of diversity and inclusion and the examination of the success of specific groups including students from underrepresented groups, international students, honors students, and athletes, among others.

**Responsibilities**

1. Encourage professional development opportunities for all instructors and staff who interact with first-year students.
2. Establish a coordinated effort to collect and disseminate information on best practices, data useful for faculty instructing first-year students, and assessment to enhance program efforts.
3. Commit to advancing and rewarding research on teaching and learning.
In early 2011, the leadership from Undergraduate Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Housing and Food Services, and Diversity and Inclusion came together to consider the first-year experience at Purdue. As a team, these four units worked in partnership to apply for participation in the Foundations of Excellence program. The Foundations of Excellence framework guides a campus in a sustained, focused self-study of the first year to determine which elements are appropriate and working well and which elements require change. More than 300 institutions have participated in the Foundations of Excellence process since its inception in 2003. The cohort for 2011-12 included eight four-year and 30 two-year institutions.

The Foundations of Excellence process provides a guided study for a task force, which is chosen as a broad representation of the campus community. At Purdue, the process organization included a leadership team of four liaisons, a steering committee, and nine Dimension committees. The Steering Committee of 34 University leaders guided discussions around nine aspirational standards for excellence in the first year known as “Foundational Dimensions.”9 Nine Dimension Committees — Philosophy, Organization, Learning, Faculty, Transitions, All Students, Diversity, Roles & Purposes, and Improvement — were charged with evaluating and rating specific performance indicators, as well as producing a formal report.

Starting in August 2011 more than 200 Purdue faculty, staff, and students studied methods to align Purdue’s resources and enhance the first-year experience. Their work began with a campus audit of the first year, resulting in the Current Practices Inventory (CPI), which gathered more than 600 different items into an evidence library. In addition, the committees considered the results of a student and faculty/staff survey designed by the Gardner Institute. The Student Survey had 2,200 responses (a response rate of 26.2 percent), while the Faculty and Staff Survey had 314 responses (a response rate of 88.9 percent). The surveys were designed to collect multiple perceptions about policies, programs, and services that address key elements related to the first year of college.


10 Evidence Library #543: Faculty/Staff Survey Results – Statistical Significance. Purdue University.

11 Evidence Library #542: Student Survey 11 Outcomes. Purdue University.
BACKGROUND

The undergraduate experience at Purdue begins with the high-quality curricular efforts found in our academic colleges, specifically student interaction with faculty in the classroom and program-level advising. Of equal importance is the participation and dedication of Student Affairs, Housing and Food Services, and Diversity and Inclusion in providing robust co-curricular efforts that lead to successful creation, implementation, and maintenance of an excellent and cohesive first-year experience.

Purdue also has a unique culture of strong college-level leadership related to curriculum, advising, and course offerings and highly regarded support programs for first-year students. Historically, these curricular and co-curricular efforts have been decentralized, resulting in an environment in which students must navigate a fragmented academic, housing, and student affairs landscape. For instance, many first-year academic programs are aligned under the Office of the Provost, yet are dispersed and disconnected. It is also noteworthy that Housing and Food Services is aligned under the Office of the Vice President for Business and Finance, Treasurer. This organizational complexity, with regard to the first year, creates challenges for both students and the University.

Additionally, the vast majority of new students are admitted directly to one of Purdue’s 283 highly individualized bachelor’s degree programs when they enter the University (91 percent versus nine percent who are admitted to the Undergraduate Studies Program). Of Purdue’s graduating students in 2011, 61 percent never changed their major, 29 percent changed their major once, six percent changed majors twice, and the remaining four percent changed majors three or more times. At Purdue, 11 percent of our students change their college (CODO — Change of Degree Objective) within their first year. Students who CODO take an additional half-year to graduate from Purdue, and on average, take 7.5 more course credits than students who graduate from their initial entry college. This has contributed to Purdue’s average time to degree being 4.27 years and our four-year baccalaureate completion rate standing at only 40 percent.

Before considering the Dimension Committee reports, an overview of the current strategic plan and key programs geared toward first-year students is provided. The strategic plan provides a glimpse into Purdue’s current vision for student success, providing perspective and a starting point for the Dimension Committees and their work.

The Strategic Plan and the University’s Learning Mission

Purdue’s two strategic plans, spanning 2001-2007 and 2008-2014, were developed in close collaboration with faculty, staff, students, alumni, state and local officials, community leaders, and members of the general public, and both set forth the mission, vision, and goals for Purdue. These plans also guide the academic and administrative structures and resources to support Purdue’s vision, mission, and goals. Purdue’s 2008-2014 strategic plan builds upon the University’s previous accomplishments and clearly articulates Purdue’s three-part commitment to learning, discovery, and engagement, under the auspices of its mission as Indiana’s land-grant university.

In turn, each college, school, and many academic and administrative departments include mission statements as well as strategic plans that complement and support the University’s overall mission and plan. Like many universities of Purdue’s size, our organizational structure consists of “silos.” This decentralized nature is effective for maintaining strong core disciplines. It has given colleges, schools, and non-academic units the opportunity to successfully develop flexible, tailored approaches designed to achieve high-level goals. Purdue departments and programs are also continually engaged in activities supporting the University’s mission and communicating the mission to various constituencies.

One of the themes of the 2008-2014 strategic plan is “Synergies Across the Disciplines,” and is meant to explore the potential for shared programs and curricula across the campus, building on the foundation of Purdue’s core disciplines and fostering new discoveries through collaboration. The strategic plan also reiterated Purdue’s commitment to its learning mission through the establishment of “Launching Tomorrow’s Leaders” as one of the University’s three main goals. Ultimately, the University seeks to “promote excellence in learning experiences and outcomes, fostering intellectual, professional,

14 The six-year graduation rate for the 2004 cohort of Purdue students was 70.4 percent, with an additional 7.4 percent of students who left Purdue completing a degree at a different institution.

and personal development to prepare learners for life and careers in a dynamic, global society.\textsuperscript{15} Purdue is also committed to a world-class undergraduate experience, particularly in the first year. Upon examination of four-year baccalaureate completion rates at Purdue, we have seen that 97 percent of students who return after their sophomore year graduate.\textsuperscript{17}

Purdue’s strategic plan calls for action on a core curriculum and an expanded exploratory college. They are considered in some detail below.

A Common Core Curriculum\textsuperscript{18}

One of the central student access- and success-focused ideas articulated in the 2008-2014 strategic plan is:

“[undertaking] the initiatives toward a University-wide core curricular experience for integration into all degree programs in response to the need for core competencies the graduates must demonstrate, reflecting the value of curricular synergies that render them as informed graduates in a global society.”

Proposals for a common core curriculum that would apply to all undergraduates have been made numerous times at Purdue, but historically, there has neither been a common set of core courses nor a common core experience required of all students. Rather, curricular decisions have been made in a decentralized manner by each college or school, each having its own set of general education requirements.

In 2009, in direct response to the strategic plan and renewed faculty interest, the Provost and University Senate formed a task force to further investigate this initiative. The task force established a premise that the core must be faculty driven and designed; feasible to offer (both in terms of cost and manageability for an undergraduate student population of approximately 30,000); offer equivalencies for students who transfer and those in CODO status; and not extend the time required to graduate.

The core curriculum task force found a significant degree of overlap when comparing the current college-based core curricula. For example, all, or nearly all, Purdue curricula require competency in mathematics, science, oral and written communication, social sciences, and the humanities. Many, but not all, of the colleges also have core requirements in global, multicultural, and diversity issues as well as a senior capstone course in the major area of study. Core courses have the potential to take advantage of synergies among diverse disciplines and related learning outcomes.

On February 20, 2012, the University Senate approved an Undergraduate Outcomes-Based Core Curriculum that will provide students with a similar general education experience, and in doing so will achieve a set of common learning outcomes required of all graduates.\textsuperscript{19} The Undergraduate Curriculum Council (UCC), a faculty committee that reports to the Educational Policy Committee, was also established as a central coordinating entity to approve foundational courses that meet particular outcomes and to oversee other policies related to the curriculum.

The State of Indiana Senate Bill 182, signed into law March 16, 2012, requires state educational institutions to create a statewide transfer general education core to be implemented by May 15, 2013, consisting of at least 30 credits.\textsuperscript{20} It is anticipated that the Purdue University West Lafayette core will align closely with the statewide core.

An Exploratory College and Interdisciplinary Majors\textsuperscript{21}

As described earlier, the majority of undergraduate students coming to Purdue are admitted directly into programs within individual colleges and schools. Of the 6,659 new first-year students that enrolled in fall 2011, 620 (nine percent) were admitted without declaring a major or college. While direct admission to a college or program works well for many students, and aids in the recruitment of students who have already chosen a field of study, in some cases this practice creates barriers for CODO students. CODO barriers are often encountered when specialized courses from one major cannot be applied toward the curricular requirements of another. Additionally, entrance requirements for programs are sometimes more stringent for CODO students than for entering first-year students. These students may also encounter enrollment limit barriers in high-demand programs.

The University is focusing intently on reducing CODO barriers and assisting undecided students.

The strategic plan calls for the consideration of a University or exploratory college that would serve a wide range of students at various points in their academic careers, and serve as a home for students who are “between colleges.” It would support students who have not selected a major, who do not initially succeed, or who change directions at Purdue. Students would have the opportunity to sample an array of disciplines in the first year, allowing them to explore their academic interests and better evaluate their talents. After deciding on their scholastic progression, students would have access to and seamlessly transfer into the various colleges on campus. The college would also be a source of guidance and support for students who are between majors.

\textsuperscript{15} Purdue University Senate Document 11-7. Purdue University Senate. http://www.purdue.edu/faculty/download.cfm?file=ABA2681D-0B76-40C7-3AC3FCD2DE89B916.pdf&name=Senate%20Document%202011-7%20Core%20Curriculum%20Amended%20and%20Approved.pdf (accessed July 12, 2012)


\textsuperscript{17} Drake, B.M. Examination of Four-Year Baccalaureate Completion Rates at Purdue University (2011). Purdue University Office of Enrollment Management.


The Undergraduate Studies Program (USP), described below, already successfully serves many of these students, but it is not designed to support all undecided students across campus. An exploratory college would allow students to explore diverse disciplines in their first year, and do so without penalty. It would help reduce the number of CODO students, improve retention, and decrease the time to degree.

**Fostering Student Success Among First-Year Students** 22

Purdue has a substantial collection of effective programs designed to help first-year students succeed, including University Orientation (via Summer Transition, Advising, and Registration and Boiler Gold Rush), Learning Communities, Access Programs, Activity Fairs, and College Orientations. 23 These programs and others help first-year students adjust to college life and begin to integrate them into the academic community, a key component influencing student success and persistence.

**Instruction Matters: Purdue Academic Course Transformation (IMPACT)** 24

Launched by the Office of the Provost in 2010, the IMPACT program seeks to improve rates of course completion and student success in foundational courses. It targets introductory undergraduate classes with large enrollments, facilitating course redesign that incorporates student-centered teaching and active learning. The redesigned curricula may include online components, group projects, and hybrid approaches that combine online and face-to-face learning in innovative spaces. 25

Through this program, instructors and departments are not only revising their gateway courses from the ground up, but also systematizing what works in the classroom and seeking to replicate these successes across additional courses. The program has a goal of revising 10 courses each semester. By the end of the 2011-2012 academic year, 32 courses had been redesigned, and the third cohort of class revisions was underway.

Faculty in the program learn about course redesign options by working with a team of instructional, technology, and assessment specialists. They also participate in a Faculty Learning Community. The process is empirically driven with careful documentation of student learning outcomes.


The IMPACT program is a collaborative effort between faculty and the Center for Instructional Excellence (CIE), Information Technology (IT), Libraries, Purdue Extended Campus, and the Discovery Learning Research Center (DLRC). The program provides faculty with time, resources, and a community of like-minded teachers interested in better engaging their students and redesigning their courses in accord with the latest research on best practices.

**Course Signals Early Warning System** 26

One innovative assessment method developed by Purdue is the nationally recognized Course Signals platform, an early intervention system that identifies students at risk of being academically unsuccessful and provides them with the opportunity to adjust their behavior, thereby improving their chances of successful course completion. Signals uses a predicted student success algorithm, based on analysis of secondary data from the course management system and student information system. A visual cue in the form of a traffic signal—where green indicates satisfactory progress and red indicates danger of failing the course—is assigned to each student and posted on Blackboard. This cue indicates how the student is progressing and provides suggestions for receiving additional help. In addition to posting a traffic signal in Blackboard, faculty and instructors can direct students toward strategies and services to help them improve their standing in the course.

Research indicates that courses that implement Signals realize a strong increase in satisfactory grades and a decrease in unsatisfactory grades and withdrawals. Individual courses see variable success with an increase in As and Bs ranging from 2.23 to 13.84 percentage points; a decrease in Cs ranging from 1.84 to 9.38 percentage points; and a decrease in Ds and Fs ranging from 0.59 to 9.40 percentage points. Combining the results of all courses using Signals in a given semester, there is a 10.37 percentage point increase in As and Bs awarded between Signals users and previous semesters of the same courses that did not use the system. Along the same lines, there is a 6.41 percentage point decrease in Ds, Fs, and withdrawals awarded to Signals users as compared to previous semesters of the same courses not using the system.

Signals also has a strong effect on retention rates. First-year retention rates for students using Signals are significantly higher—nearly 13 percentage points higher than peers who were not in a course with Signals. 27 The disparity grows over time, meaning that first-year students in Signals-based courses are more likely to graduate. The four-year retention rate is 18 percent higher for students in a Signals course.

Student Access, Transition, and Success Programs (SATS)\(^{28}\)

Purdue’s nationally recognized Student Access, Transition, and Success Programs provide pre-college preparation and college success initiatives and services for undergraduate students and their families, particularly first-year students. The interconnected programs in SATS assist students in progressive stages of development, and have as their ultimate goals an increased rate of student degree completion, future employment or study, dedicated citizenship, and responsible leadership. Following are examples of SATS programs.

SUMMER TRANSITION, ADVISING, AND REGISTRATION (STAR)\(^{29}\) is a 48-daylong summer advising and registration program that occurs before new undergraduates start their first fall semester at Purdue. Students participate in campus orientation sessions, meet with academic advisors, and register for classes. Attendance is required for all new domestic first-year and transfer students. This revamped orientation program, previously known as Day on Campus, was launched for fall 2009 and more than 6,100 students (92 percent of domestic first-year and transfer students) attended.

The University views participation in summer orientation as extremely important. Analysis shows a significant difference in the first-to-second-year retention rates of students who attended the summer advisement and registration program compared to those who did not attend. For example, 2011 STAR participants had a 91 percent first-to-second-year retention rate, compared to 88 percent for those who did not attend the program.\(^{30}\)

STAR is also designed to be inclusive of accompanying family members. Families of first-generation students, and those with family members who went to college before first-year and transition program options existed, are provided information that will enable them to be partners in enhancing their students’ success.


\(^{29}\) Ibid.

\(^{30}\) The 2011 Summer Transition, Advising and Registration Program (STAR) had 5,704 new students (93 percent of New Students Required to Attend) and an additional 12,000 family members and guests in attendance during the 18 STAR dates.

BOILER GOLD RUSH (BGR)\(^{31}\) is a voluntary weekend orientation for new undergraduate students held before the start of fall semester classes. BGR includes programming that addresses an array of academic, personal, and social college transition needs. In 2011, 4,953 new first-year and transfer students participated, nearly 71 percent of the new first-year student population. Students were charged $520 to take part in the 2012 BGR, with SATS funding 200 full and 100 partial scholarships to support participation by low-income students. BGR participants consistently have significantly higher retention rates than non-participants (91.2 percent versus 86.8 percent, respectively), which is especially true for participating women and underrepresented minorities. More importantly, BGR participants tend to graduate at a higher rate than their non-participating peers.

LEARNING COMMUNITIES (LC)\(^{32}\) at Purdue are academic programs that co-enroll a group of 20 to 30 first-year undergraduate students in two or more courses based on an academic major or theme, place a group of first-year students in the same residence hall based on an academic major or theme, or both. The University’s coordinated Learning Communities program began in the fall of 1999 with two communities enrolling a total of 46 students. By fall 2011, the Learning Communities program had grown to 63 communities with 1,663 unique participants and a total of 1,888 points of participation, more than 25 percent of the first-year class. Learning Communities participants, especially women and underrepresented minorities, consistently have significantly higher retention rates than non-participants. More importantly, Learning Communities participants tend to graduate at a higher rate (75 percent versus 70 percent, respectively) than their non-participating peers.

A hallmark of Purdue’s Learning Communities program is curricular cohesion, whereby instructors connect what they teach in their respective courses, so that learning overlaps and is reinforced in the courses included in the community. In addition, instructors are provided with co-curricular programming funds to conduct out-of-class learning activities that reinforce what is taught in the classroom.

Assessment of the Learning Communities program shows that participating students earn higher grades, make friends faster, and have significantly higher retention rates than comparable non-participants. Additionally, retention rates are especially improved for minority students.

Women and minorities are represented in Learning Communities at significantly higher levels than in the first-year student body as a whole. For example, during fall 2010, minorities constituted 15 percent of Learning Communities participants, compared to 8 percent of the new first-year class. During fall 2007, women constituted 54 percent of participants, compared to 43 percent of the new first-year class.


\(^{32}\) Ibid.
In fall 2009, Purdue launched one of the largest COMMON READING PROGRAMS in the nation. During STAR orientation, first-year and transfer students are provided with a complimentary copy of the common reading and are advised to return to campus that fall prepared to discuss the book. The semester begins with various book events that are integrated into course assignments, Learning Communities activities, and BGR.

THE UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES PROGRAM33 was created in 1995 to give highly qualified students opportunities to discover academic and career interests before declaring a major. The mission of the program is to assist and empower students to:

- Develop and implement individualized plans for academic success and personal and career development, and
- Make a smooth and academically sound transition from USP to each student’s chosen degree-granting program.

Informed students make better decisions, so USP students are encouraged to actively seek information and explore. Two cornerstones of the USP program are strong advising and a three-credit course in which students gain insight into their own interests and personality characteristics, learn about Purdue majors and the world of work, take inventories, and complete assignments that are focused on self-discovery. While USP students must declare and enter a degree-granting program by the end of their fourth semester of enrollment, most declare a major during their second or their third semester. USP students have moved on to every available major on campus.

Tracking students after they leave USP shows that while 40 percent of all Purdue students change their major at least once, 90 percent of students who begin in USP stay in their chosen majors until graduation. Additionally, students starting in USP graduate at the same rate as, or better than, their counterparts admitted to specific colleges and schools at Purdue.

University Residences is the largest division of HFS. Purdue’s West Lafayette campus has one of the top 10 largest university housing systems in the country, and is the largest university housing system in the country without a live-in requirement. In fall 2011, 90 percent of new first-year students and 35 percent of all undergraduates opted to live on campus. Residence hall capacity for 2011–2012 was 11,617 students, plus 757 occupants in family housing. University Residences employs 267 resident assistants and staff residents in student leadership and peer advisor positions. In addition to the Residential Life professional staff, these para-professionals offer students opportunities for developing life skills. In part because of the more than 1,800 co-curricular programs offered annually, students who live on-campus achieve better grade point averages and have higher first-year-to-sophomore retention rates than students who live off-campus.

University Residences collaborates with numerous campus partners on everything from Learning Communities to Supplemental Instruction and from BGR to satellite Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offices. Residential Life helps students become productive citizens by fostering respect for self, for others, and for the community.

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DIMENSION ONE: Philosophy

Foundations Institutions approach the first year in ways that are intentional and based on a philosophy/rationale of the first year that informs relevant institutional policies and practices. The philosophy/rationale is explicit, clear and easily understood, consistent with the institutional mission, widely disseminated, and, as appropriate, reflects a consensus of campus constituencies. The philosophy/rationale is also the basis for first-year organizational policies, practices, structures, leadership, department/unit philosophies, and resource allocation.35

As previously discussed, Purdue’s educational mission is clearly articulated in its strategic plan. In pursuit of that mission, Purdue has established numerous efforts that facilitate effective learning and teaching, from assessment to support for teaching to methods for continually improving the academic environment.36 Additionally, many areas of Purdue are highly sensitive to the needs of first-year students and have developed approaches that include intentional programs that positively enhance the first-year experience.

Despite having both a clear statement of its overall learning mission and nationally recognized programs focused on first-year teaching and learning, Purdue lacks a common statement of institutional values specific to the first-year experience.

Just as Purdue’s strategic plan goals are pervasive on campus, a well-conceived and articulated philosophy statement regarding the first-year experience would provide a clear and concise vision to inform and catalyze relevant institutional policies and practices. The statement would serve as a foundation for organizational policies, practices, structures, leadership, department and unit missions, and resource allocation.

A cross-campus review of institutional data, Office of Admissions literature, internal publications and websites, mission statements, vision statements, value statements, strategic plans, and the Foundations of Excellence Faculty and Staff Surveys revealed that a few individual departments within colleges or divisions have some themes or foci specific to the first-year experience, but these elements are neither uniform nor widely adopted across campus.

The Foundations of Excellence process provides a unique opportunity to formulate a common statement of philosophy and vet that statement among a broad cross-section of campus representatives. The cross-campus characteristics of the nine Dimension Committees provide a positive environment in which one central philosophy statement can gain acceptance, influence colleges and departments, and solidify a commitment to the management changes necessary to adopt this philosophy and positively shape campus culture. Adoption of this statement will provide core values, clarity, and an ongoing, high-level awareness so that there will be a unified approach to goal setting and direction.

We are mindful that Purdue’s size presents a challenge. As with any statement of this nature, at a large institution there can be differences in interpretation and some risk that the statement will be ignored, misunderstood, or altered to support specific needs rather than the collective good. To make institutional change that is long lasting and has significant impact, executive leadership and leadership from all units that interact with first-year students must keep this statement in mind and give it high priority as they allocate resources and make decisions.

Recommendations

1. Vet the following proposed Purdue University Philosophy Statement for the First-Year Experience with the University community.

At Purdue, we believe the first-year experience should enable students to build a solid foundation for success, not only at the University, but also throughout their lives.

Through learning experiences and support services, both in and beyond the classroom, students grow intellectually and develop personally. They acquire knowledge and skills to succeed academically, build confidence and resilience to accept and embrace challenges, and develop their personal and academic identity.

Students are welcomed into and expected to participate actively in a vibrant and intellectually challenging community within which all members feel a sense of belonging, irrespective of personal or group status, culture, or ethnicity. They share interests and activities with one another and learn to think, act, and remain openly respectful of diverse views and experiences.

Students are challenged to become globally prepared, interdependent, critical thinkers, with an ever-increasing ability to locate, assess, and apply knowledge resources that help them develop as whole, productive citizens and leaders on campus and beyond.

As a Purdue community, we hold ourselves accountable for providing experiences, support services, access to faculty and staff, and a safe learning environment whereby students can achieve these goals.

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2. Request that the executive leadership, deans, and Foundations of Excellence Steering Committee review the statement and evaluate its impact on their respective units through honest discussion of challenges, opportunities, action items, and assessment.

3. Affirm the approved statement through the Foundations of Excellence process and roll out via a communication plan in cooperation with Purdue Marketing & Media.

DIMENSION TWO: Organization

Foundations Institutions create organizational structures and policies that provide a comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated approach to the first year. These structures and policies provide oversight and alignment of all first-year efforts. A coherent first-year experience is realized and maintained through effective partnerships among academic affairs, student affairs, and other administrative units and is enhanced by ongoing faculty and staff development activities and appropriate budgetary arrangements.37

As described earlier, Purdue’s decentralized curricular and co-curricular efforts can lead to dissatisfaction for students and the University. Thus, the University must identify and facilitate intentional connections between these areas while realigning programs in the most effective manner. In some cases, a change to our organizational design will be necessary, and in others, strong partnerships among various domains will help develop a coordinated program. Academic units will need to partner with staff from Housing and Food Services, Advising, and Student Affairs to create a connected educational landscape that can be easily navigated by first-year students. Faculty participation is also a key component, because faculty interactions with students both inside and outside of the classroom are critical to student success. Most importantly, as other Dimension Committees have concluded, in order to bridge the gaps, success of first-year students must be a priority for administration and faculty.

Rethinking Organizational Design

Although Purdue has a number of highly successful support programs for first-year students, these programs are not all aligned in a manner that makes for a synchronous effect. The current structure does not intentionally guide the first-year experience.

The Foundations of Excellence Student Survey results showed that students struggle most often with getting accurate and detailed information regarding non-academic support, but it is not clear whether their lack of understanding is directly related to the organizational structure of support services for first-year students, a lack of communication and coordination across campus, or both.

The survey results provided evidence that there is a lack of integration among the various offices serving first-year students at Purdue. On four of the six survey questions related to the Organization Dimension, results demonstrated that students lack sufficient understanding of where to go if they have questions concerning academic rules (e.g., academic probation), administrative questions (e.g., registration), non-academic matters (e.g., money management), and getting involved with an institution-sponsored organization or event.

However, some evidence strongly supports that faculty and staff are knowledgeable about how to direct students to support services, even though there is no single point of reference. In the Student Survey, respondents reported that faculty and staff referred them to the right office when they had questions.

The Organization Dimension Committee found that Purdue’s current structure is a “federation” of colleges and departments with an unofficial coordinating body of the SATS department. We also observed that non-academic departments appear to collaborate more than the academic units in regard to first-year students.

The Committee believes that in order to improve student success, Purdue must develop a coordinated, collaborative, University-wide strategy among both academic and non-academic units that will provide support for new students throughout their first year. Additionally, efforts during the first year must address educational issues in order to help students discover their passions and talents. We can create an environment that encourages students to pursue excellence and that supports them in their endeavors.

**Communication**

The Committee found a significant amount of evidence demonstrating that volumes of valuable information are shared with first-year students. Based on the various examples of communication gathered in our research (and logged into the Evidence Library), we believe that up to the point of offer of admission the University speaks with one voice or at least in a consistent manner.

However, after the point of offer of admission, there is considerable disparity and variability among the content and timing of communications to first-year students. Careful study of these items revealed some redundancies and inconsistencies. This is equally true after the start of term.

On one hand, SATS and the Office of Enrollment Management (EM) communicate to new students on behalf of the University; on the other hand, academic units distribute dozens of publications, postcards, and emails on behalf of their respective units. In most instances, this communication is not coordinated and there is no central message or call for action. In some instances, these messages conflict. For example, there were disconnects in the content of the University’s STAR presentation and the presentations of the colleges and departments.

**Advising**

Our research determined that academic advising is the purview of the colleges, schools, and departments. The various advising or student services offices in the colleges and schools are organized under the respective college or school’s Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education.

Although each college or school provides advising services, the structures of these departments vary. For example, the College of Liberal Arts has a centrally coordinated advising office, the College of Agriculture’s advising is conducted primarily by faculty, while others have relatively autonomous departmental advising offices.

We found that only two academic units provide advising specifically tailored to the first year. The College of Engineering provides academic advising as part of its First-Year Engineering Program and has an Assistant Dean for First Year. USP is focused solely on advising students in their first four semesters.

In general, academic advising is not well synchronized across campus. There is neither a University policy regarding overall advising, nor is there a policy that guides these efforts with regard to first-year students. This has resulted in tremendous variability in the advising experience for first-year students.

A notable exception is the collaboration between academic units. The Heads of Advising meet monthly as a self-convening and self-governing body in order to collaborate and share best practices. Recently, this group has worked (with the support and advice of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs) to develop a template (or best practice) to define the role and qualifications for an academic advisor at Purdue.

Additionally, the Office of the Registrar routinely communicates information regarding registration processes and policies and the campus advising community has made a significant effort to advise the incoming class during the STAR process.
Course Signals
Purdue’s Course Signals online early warning and intervention system, described earlier, is an innovative assessment tool. Our study of the Signals system and its efficacy shows that it is a valuable and successful addition to traditional systems, but in order to be truly effective, it must be part of a centrally coordinated and comprehensive program for student success. The system is reliant on:

1. Faculty willingness to report progress frequently and interact with Blackboard
2. Whether curricula are organized in such a way that progress can be reported in this manner
3. A University-wide system or plan for outreach based on resulting signals

Integration of First-Year Work
Purdue does not have a unit that is responsible for the coordination and oversight of the first year, and the Foundations of Excellence Faculty and Staff Surveys reflect this perception as well as indicate a lack of communication between the different areas responsible for the first-year experience. The University’s decentralized efforts have led to redundancy in program offerings across campus, as well as disconnected communication, orientation, advising, programming, and academic initiatives. This lack of collaboration even seems to play out in some cases of territorialism, lack of transparency, and unwillingness to collaborate across campus. The result is a challenging, and sometimes frustrating, environment for first-year students.

Interestingly, there are a variety of successful programs designed to facilitate access to and support within higher education for first-generation and low-income students, along with programs that provide direct academic assistance to these students. These programs provide essential services that enable and support academic success. The programs reside at both the University level (e.g., HORIZONS, Academic Success Center, Supplemental Instruction, Purdue Promise, Science Bound) and within the academic units (e.g., help labs, tutoring programs).

We could not discern a University-wide mechanism that synchronizes the efforts of all of these groups, or that would effectively connect all of these students to the assets and services available at the University. Similarly, the University-level programs reside in different areas and are not synchronized.

Use of Evaluation Results
The use of evaluation results to improve the first-year experience is varied across campus. Central offices such as SATS, STAR, BGR, and Learning Communities, have fairly robust assessment plans and feedback loops. There is significant evidence that these programs each take their feedback and make program alterations for improvement.

For example, the planning, expectations, and feedback in Learning Communities is evident in the program’s team plan, in the STAR program’s communication plan, and in the Purdue Promise assessment plans, course feedback, evaluations, focus groups, goals, etc.38

Purdue Promise (which is coordinated by SATS) also offers a glimpse into the gap between the actions of central initiatives and the actions of academic units. Much of the effort of Purdue Promise is centralized, not found in the colleges and schools, and there is no real indication that there is much sharing either way at a curricular level. The assessment plan indicates that coursework is largely general studies.39 The program overview suggests a specific scope that is not integrated into the academic units.40

Evidence from the academic units is much more mixed. For example, in the College of Engineering’s First-Year Engineering Program, there is significant evidence of a deliberate and studied approach to the program year and feedback loops that result in program changes and improvements. Their approach is more comprehensive than what is found in many of the other academic units.

In units without first-year experience coursework, attention to the first-year student is commonly manifested by a program orientation course that is generalist in nature. While these courses are evaluated, the full experience is not. The evaluations are not comprehensive or holistic, but focus on single factors of the experience. This approach is often supplemented by referring segments of the population to centrally provided opportunities such as Learning Communities or Supplemental Instruction.

It should be noted that units often consider the curricular foundation elements of the first-year experience through reviews of the performance of upper-class students. However, at this stage there is likely survivor bias in the data that is collected from students. National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) surveys and other first-year experience campus instruments seem to have limited influence in the academic colleges and schools. While in most cases the units are aware of this data, it is not widely used to advise change in curriculum or in the student experience.

38 Evidence Library #442: Learning Communities Participation Chart; #444: Learning Communities Team Plan; #501: STAR 2012 Communications Group; #481: Purdue Promise Assessment Plan; #482: Purdue Promise FYE Course Feedback; #483: Purdue Promise FYE Course Evaluation; #484: Purdue Promise Cohort Goals; #485: Purdue Promise FYE Course Pre-Test; #487: Purdue Promise FYE Course Evaluation; #488: Purdue Promise Academic Coaching Evaluation; #489: Purdue Promise Academic Coaching Evaluation from Student; #490: Purdue Promise Mentoring Evaluation; #493: Purdue Promise Sophomore Focus Group – Questions and Feedback; #494: Purdue Promise Student Leader Training Pre-test; #495: Purdue Promise Student Leader Post-test; #496: Purdue Promise Mentoring Focus Group. Purdue University.

39 Evidence Library #481: Purdue Promise Assessment Plan. Purdue University.

40 Evidence Library #509: Purdue Promise Program Overview. Purdue University.
Perhaps the clearest indication of the limited impact that first-year experience evaluations have within the academic units is the responses to Purdue’s Deans and Department Heads Survey.41 The comments indicate limited feedback loops and limited, if any, use of the data. Further, the absolute response rate was disappointing.

This is further borne out by the comparisons of academic advising’s contribution to first-year success vis-à-vis the contribution of other units.42 Unfortunately, this is not new information to the University, as referenced in the Higher Learning Commission report.43

Financial Resources

Three questions in the Faculty and Staff Survey directly addressed resources. Although the questions relate to both personnel resources and fiscal resources, we believe that personnel resources must necessarily involve fiscal resources. In this regard, the evidence is limited in usefulness.

As a result, the Committee composed an additional three-item survey that was reviewed by the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs and the Gardner Institute. This survey was distributed to 18 leadership representatives in the academic colleges, libraries, International Programs, units reporting to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs (Undergraduate Studies Program, SATS, ASC, Enrollment Management), Student Affairs, and the Honors College. These representatives were asked to further distribute the survey to those within their units with direct responsibility for the first-year student experience. Surveys were returned by 11 units.45

Based on survey responses and other evidence, we found that depending on the unit, financial resources range from generally adequate to inadequate. As new needs emerge they do not usually come with additional resources. For example, in at least one reported unit, while staffing costs are supported, fundraising is required to support all programming costs.

Course Needs

While the unavailability of over-subscribed course lists makes it difficult to assess the number of students who are unable to register for courses, it is reported that some courses are insufficient to meet the need.

Classroom Space

Classroom and instructional laboratory space has increased significantly over the past 10 years through addition and renovation,46 but there is still a need for classrooms to be renovated and instructional equipment to be upgraded to take advantage of new technologies and pedagogies (e.g., IMPACT).

Financial Aid and Scholarships

Scholarships, especially for underrepresented populations, are inadequate.

Academic Advising

Issues with academic advising and counseling relate to varying levels of staff expertise and a wide range of staff-to-student ratios across the academic units, thus providing students with significantly different experiences with advisors.

Generally, support services need to be enhanced and better coordinated, including tutoring opportunities, Graduate Student Teaching Assistants (GTA’s), Undergraduate Teaching Assistant support, and expansion of services and staffing in CAPS.

41 Evidence Library #480: Deans Responses to Use of Data; #478: Department Heads Responses to Use of Data. Purdue University.
42 Evidence Library #479: Question 85 Student Survey. Purdue University.
43 Evidence Library #59: HLC/NCA Advising Assessment Report 2010. HLC/NCA.
Recommendations

1. Expand admit-to-university opportunities.
   - The experiences and understandings of first-year students are that many are unaware of their options. Moreover, many talented students have yet to narrow their scope to a single major. While some first-year courses easily transfer to other majors, other first-year courses have limited portability, leading to increased time to degree. Thus, given the uncertainty among our students, it is incumbent on the University to provide the opportunity for students to discover their career interests.
   - We recommend a hybrid model of admission by which a significantly larger number of students is admitted to a University-level program in the first year (so-called, exploratory) and reduce the number admitted directly to a program.
   - The number of students admitted to the University division and those admitted directly to a program would be determined collaboratively between the University and the colleges and schools. We believe this model will better facilitate the movement of students across programs.
   - We recognize that a model of all students being admitted to a University division is unlikely to be successful within the context of Purdue. However, we believe that the University, in consultation with the colleges and schools, could limit admittance directly to program (criteria defined by the program faculty) and that all others could be admitted into a first-year program for undergraduate studies. These students would either pursue academic exploration (in the vein of the current USP) or coursework that would prepare them for ultimate movement into a specific program (pre-program).

2. Establish a comprehensive student success organization at the University level with responsibility to coordinate all undergraduate student access, transition, and success activities (in the first year and beyond).
   - Align the organization under the Office of the Provost, including orientation programs, Learning Communities, the Common Reading Program, Supplemental Instruction, Purdue Promise, Twenty-First Century Scholars site supervision and support coordination, HORIZONS, Science Bound, and the Academic Success Center. Further, the portfolio of this organization should include tutoring, peer-mentoring, academic assistance, and support to transfer, veteran, and commuter students.
   - This organization should also be empowered to coordinate, complement, and support related efforts that reside within the academic units.
   - This organization should be advised by a board or committee of faculty and staff.

3. Establish a consistent first-year seminar course requirement.
   - A consistent seminar experience is an intentional effort to formulate an overarching message that is received by all first-year students, helping to build a foundation for graduation from Purdue.
   - Every program that admits first-year students should offer a course that would be a combination of unit-appropriate content and content determined by the University to be appropriate to facilitate first-year student success and establish core principles. Examples of possible University core principles might include academic expectations, academic integrity, student rights, information literacy, common reading, and campus resources. The actual core principles should be developed with input from all academic and student success areas and reviewed on a continuing basis to remain relevant. Course content should be sufficiently common across all majors so that a change in major would not require a student to take an additional first-year seminar.
   - This effort should be coordinated under the Office of the Provost, guided by a faculty-led committee, and specifically connected to the core curriculum.

4. Create a University-level division for student success.
   - We recognize that this Committee’s other recommendations are functionally related and could be clustered under a single organizational unit. This umbrella organization would oversee the first-year experience including the University-level program and success programs. The unit would also coordinate foundational course availability, first-year seminars, and professional development programs across the University. This unit would focus on the first-year experience (and beyond) and be complementary to and integrated with academic units.
   - This unit would be the responsibility of a senior academic leader. A primary function of this organization would be to facilitate the involvement of faculty and staff from across the University in providing an outstanding first-year experience for all students.
   - The benefit of this is that Purdue will have an intentionally developed and coordinated, University-wide strategy and organization that will provide support for new students throughout their first year. We will create an environment that better encourages students to pursue excellence and that supports them in their endeavors. Thus, academic and support units will need to fully and collaboratively participate in the first-year experience as we shift the focus of our efforts to facilitate student success.

5. Coordinate academic advising in the first year at the University-level.
   - The University-level organization (described above) should be staffed with professional advisors who have a manageable and appropriate advisee load in accordance with professional norms. Students admitted to individual programs would receive a similar set of advising opportunities guided by the same professional norms. These services would be provided by college and school advisors and be coordinated at the University level.
6. Establish a process that coordinates service courses.
   - Ensure that service course space needs are identified well in advance, offered in a timely fashion, and distributed in such a way that students, particularly in the first year, are able to make satisfactory academic progress. It will be especially important to provide space in foundational courses for the students who will be admitted to the University-level program.
   - This activity should be coordinated with the Office of the Provost to help direct needed offerings and determine supportive funding. The formal process should include participation by representatives of all stages of the process, including the Office of Enrollment Management, the colleges' and schools' Associate Deans, and the Office of the Registrar. The process should monitor the outcome of meeting student course needs and use that information, in conjunction with other data, as a feedback loop into future enrollment management and programmatic funding decisions.

7. Develop faculty and staff training.
   - Training efforts must be intentional, focused, consistent, and help faculty and staff meet students where they are and help move them toward success. It is important to note that faculty and staff have specific training needs when seeking to improve their positive impact on students (e.g., instruction methods). However, there are a number of areas that overlap, suggesting some joint training efforts would be effective and advisable. These areas can include general student development concepts and theory, trends in students matriculating to Purdue, etc.
   - Proposed training efforts should be conducted through existing channels whenever possible. For example, New Faculty Orientation should include a first-year experience component.
   - Staff and new GTAs who work closely with first-year students should also have an orientation program with relevant information within the first several months of employment. Create a professional development track for Continuing Lecturers (non-tenure-track instructional staff hired primarily to teach large enrollment foundational courses).

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**DIMENSION THREE: Learning**

Foundations Institutions deliver intentional curricular and co-curricular learning experiences that engage students in order to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors consistent with the desired outcomes of higher education and the institution’s philosophy and mission. Whether in or out of the classroom, learning also promotes increased competence in critical thinking, ethical development, and the lifelong pursuit of knowledge.  

Two of Purdue’s many strengths have been its world-class research and its commitment to “excellence in teaching with innovative pedagogies and curricular synergies for improved learning and student success.”  

\[46\] We have an opportunity to combine these strengths by making Purdue known for field-defining research on the scholarship of teaching and learning. Multiple campus initiatives and entities support this goal, both directly and indirectly, including the development of a core curriculum, creation of an Honors College, the IMPACT program, and trailblazing federally funded research by the Discovery Learning Research Center (DLRC).

Purdue uses continual assessment and measurement of learning outcomes to discover what is working and to further improve what is already a widely respected (and sought-after) educational experience. Key empirical findings include orientation courses and programs that better prepare students for higher education, learning communities that increase student success, and teaching technologies that reduce dropout rates. Our challenge lies in coordinating and disseminating these many successes and replicating them across campus.


Effective Teaching and Learning: A Brief History at Purdue47

Purdue has a long-standing reputation for excellence in undergraduate, graduate, and professional education. The University values this reputation and seeks to uphold it by providing faculty, future faculty (i.e., graduate students), and teaching staff with a wide range of effective teaching support programs, professional development opportunities, and technical and infrastructure support, and by recognizing and rewarding teaching excellence and innovation. Effective teaching that results in effective learning for all students remains at the core of Purdue’s mission. It begins with the faculty and is encouraged by an active and highly visible support and reward structure.

Center for Instructional Excellence (CIE)48

The Center for Instructional Excellence is the primary resource on campus for teaching and learning support services. CIE provides opportunities for faculty development through workshops, seminars, and teaching consultation. More than 50 teaching skills workshops are offered every year, addressing the basics of teaching (including effective lecturing, designing a syllabus, and leading discussions) and the more substantive elements of critical thinking, active learning, and testing and grading.

CIE also provides faculty with a number of support services, including a proctor pool to assist with test administration; instructional data processing (scoring bubble sheets); consultation with academic units and individual instructors on specific classroom teaching improvements; and an online resource with teaching topics and tips, ranging from cooperative and collaborative learning techniques to large class teaching and learning styles.

CIE-facilitated workshops are assessed through pre- and post-workshop surveys to measure learning and workshop satisfaction. These results drive the design and facilitation of future workshops and other CIE services.

CIE plays a proactive role and provides stewardship for the scholarship of teaching and learning through its affiliate membership in the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning; as an active member of the Big Ten’s Committee for Institutional Cooperation directors of teaching centers group; beginning a new program for improving teaching and retention in chemistry gateway courses; and providing leadership for service learning. Academic units also conduct teaching workshops, often with CIE input, designed specifically to the pedagogical aspects of their discipline.

The Teaching Academy52

The Teaching Academy is a group of master teachers brought together through a competitive nomination process to create a collective voice for teaching and learning on campus. The academy’s mission is to provide leadership and resources to enhance the quality of undergraduate, graduate, and outreach teaching and learning. Academy fellows lead a seminar series, Conversations about Teaching, on important educational issues, and the Academy regularly invites prominent teaching and teaching assessment scholars to present seminars on campus. The Academy’s faculty mentoring network connects fellows with junior faculty members to support their development as scholarly teachers, and the competitive travel grant program provides financial support for travel to professional conferences focused on teaching and learning. Faculty, professional teaching staff, and graduate teaching assistants are eligible for membership in the Academy.

Graduate Student Teaching Assistants52

Graduate students are an essential component of undergraduate education at Purdue, particularly for first-year undergraduates. For graduate students aspiring to academic careers, the development of teaching skills and credentials is an important part of their graduate education. Of the 7,937 graduate students enrolled in the University in fall 2011, 25 percent held an assistantship with responsibilities for teaching or teaching support. In 2011, 23 percent of all teaching contact hours on the West Lafayette campus were provided by GTAs, primarily in laboratory courses and recitation sections for large enrollment first-year and sophomore-level courses. GTAs have access to the wide array of teaching support services available to faculty on campus.

Learning Goals

At the onset of the Foundations of Excellence process, there was no University-wide set of common learning goals for first-year students, although many activities directed to first-year students (including Admissions, Student Affairs, and Residence Halls) have stated learning goals for the first year. Among the units that have learning goals, publicity of these goals varies widely. Some are not clearly articulated, and there has not been an attempt to coordinate these goals across units.

As described earlier, the recent move toward a core curriculum and a series of common “competencies”53 appears to be a strong step toward coordination.54 When fully implemented, the University core would not only clearly state the common learning goals for all students (including foundational competencies for first-year students), but would require every unit to track students’ success and outcomes on those goals. The University has appointed a Director of Assessment to oversee learning outcomes assessment at Purdue and has formed the Undergraduate Curriculum Council (UCC) to oversee the implementation of the core curriculum.

50 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
53 Evidence Library #296: Learning Outcomes. Purdue University.
54 Evidence Library #580: Proposal for University Core. Purdue University.
Many units both within and outside the academic curriculum (many of which are accredited externally) already have publicized learning outcomes and goals that are clearly specified and tracked. For example, the Purdue University Student Health Center (PUSH) has worked in cooperation with the Vice President for Student Affairs to expand alcohol awareness education on campus. Other first-year goals that are clearly articulated through Admissions and Residence Halls include academic success in classroom and developing a basic skill set (something the University core would also address).

More generally, many academic colleges, schools, and departments, such as Pharmacy,55 Psychology Sciences, Engineering,56 and Chemistry have courses or programs that orient students to their majors and help them select appropriate courses. The primary learning objective for these courses is to give students a clear sense of careers in those areas and the pathway to those careers at Purdue (e.g., majors, courses, etc.). For example, the College of Engineering has representatives for each of its schools come in and talk about careers in their respective areas as well as outline the pathways to success in those areas. Similarly, the Department of Psychology Sciences has individuals and students from each of its areas talk about careers and courses necessary to succeed in those careers. The Department of Consumer Sciences and Retailing has seniors and alumni mentor first-year students. Again, the goal is to give students a bridge from the classroom to lifelong success outside of college (a core value within our strategic plan). Other programs dedicated to giving students a common learning experience include Learning Communities and the Common Reading Program (used at least once by about 32 percent of incoming students57). We concur with the Faculty Dimension Committee in the pressing need to expand these programs and in the need for more faculty involvement in them.

### Instructional Methods and Engaging Students

Of the large-enrollment courses listed, all but FSY 120 have traditionally made use of GTAs to teach recitations. This arrangement allows for more personalized contact with students and smaller class sizes (something students often request58). Each of the respective departments supervise their GTAs closely, albeit in different ways.

The Committee for the Education of Teaching Assistants (CETA) is a group of faculty, GTAs, and staff appointed by the provost and led by CIE to help prepare graduate students in their roles as teachers. Prior to the beginning of each fall semester, CIE conducts “get ready to teach” workshops for new GTAs. All participants have opportunities to practice-teach and receive performance feedback from Teaching Academy fellows and CIE professional staff. CETA sponsors an annual awards banquet to honor excellence in graduate student teaching, a campus-wide event at which academic departments are invited to recognize their outstanding GTAs. GTAs may further enhance their teaching skills and credentials through CIE’s Graduate Teacher Technology Certificate program.59

Within the academic colleges, the Department of English requires instructors to complete a yearlong preparatory course before they teach, and the Department of Mathematics requires instructors based on teaching evaluations. The Department of Chemistry also makes innovative use of “idea learning communities,” small groups of like-minded students who stay together throughout the class. This helps students feel a sense of community and has received positive feedback from students.

While this innovation in teaching continues across these classes, the Committee felt that a more robust process for documenting and evaluating effectiveness of specific support services for instructional practices is needed. At Purdue, there are multiple potential avenues for preparing instructors for teaching first-year students. These include the CIE, which offers, in addition to workshops, graduate teaching certification; Information Technology at Purdue (ITaP), which offers workshops and numerous resources on teaching with technology; the Teaching Academy, as well as numerous individual units who offer aid to instructors of first-year students. There are numerous opportunities and possibilities for improvement, but there is no list of best practices (specifically tied to outcomes) across these entities. (See the recommendations by the Improvement Dimension Committee for examples of how this could be accomplished.)

A possible model for coordinating these efforts is suggested by the success of the IMPACT program, described earlier.60 The collaborative process is empirically driven with careful documentation of student learning outcomes. When combined with the University core curriculum, IMPACT should have a strong positive effect in the coming years.

It should be noted that it is difficult to engage students that do not attend class. Attendance in large lectures, particularly those with no set attendance policy (such as MA 161), ranges from 70 percent to as low as 50 percent. With large multiple-choice exams as the norm, students may feel that they do not need to attend, and too many students simply cram (or even cheat) to pass their exams. Those students that do attend class can often feel lost in the crowd.61 We feel that this is a recipe for non-engagement and shallow learning. High-stakes testing creates a climate that is ripe for cheating and cursory, rather than deep, learning. Regular quizzes, group work, or an attendance policy that gives students a reason to come to class would seem a necessary first step toward engaging students.

55 Evidence Library #502: PHPR100 Syllabus. Purdue University.
56 Evidence Library #562: Program for First-Year Engineers. Purdue University.
57 Evidence Library #567: Open-ended Questions by Filter of Office Visited. Purdue University.
58 Ibid.
60 Evidence Library #470: Mission and Goals of IMPACT. Purdue University.
61 Evidence Library #567: Open-ended Questions by Filter of Offices Visited. Purdue University.
The Committee also noted a common theme, and challenge, for Purdue — the balance of power in determining what is taught in class moves from faculty to unit to college to University. Meaning that in many ways, the classroom is a monarchy, where the individual faculty member has the most influence in what and how material is taught — as it should be. Any large-scale change of curriculum or teaching methods must begin with faculty and be fully supported by the colleges and departments. (See similar discussion in the Faculty Dimension Committee report.) This is especially true given that as a Research I university, many faculty do not receive tenure (or even much credit) for excellence in teaching. Pedagogy often takes a backseat to research, and there has traditionally been little motivation to revise courses once they have been prepared. Moreover, it is rare for instructors or departments to embark on major course revisions (unless accreditation is involved).

Course Outcomes

Consistent University-wide evaluation of learning outcomes for these particular courses is lacking, but it is worth noting that many courses and programs at Purdue do a good job of tracking learning outcomes, especially programs accredited by outside bodies. In addition, the PSY 120 course redesign (as part of the IMPACT program) represents an interesting test case for a pathway to outcome tracking in large enrollment courses.

PSY 120 was one of the first large-enrollment courses to participate in the IMPACT program, and it now documents specific student outcomes and ties curriculum changes directly to these outcomes. Indeed, a fundamental component of the IMPACT program is to work backward from desired student outcomes to design curriculum, classroom technology, and other aspects of the course, including delivery method. In this case, PSY 120 went from a 500-student large lecture that met three hours a week, to a hybrid format with two hours of online lecture and one hour of live recitations that range in size from 40 to 80 students.

Once again, the smaller class size and group projects resulted in increases in student ratings of engagement, attendance that approaches 98 percent, higher grades, and some improvements on standardized test scores of content. As more of the large enrollment courses become involved in the IMPACT program, they will more directly tie classroom activities and curriculum to learning outcomes.

When implemented, the University core curriculum (and the proposed UCC) will provide another mechanism for global tracking of student skills and accountability in courses for teaching foundational skills.

There is a need for broad, consistent tracking of course outcomes across the University, and, again, we concur with the suggestions of the Improvement Dimension Committee detailing additional ways and means for tracking student outcomes and dissemination of best practices.

Courses with High D/Failure/Withdrawal/Incomplete (DFWI) Rates

The University’s commitment to supporting and improving effective teaching and learning is underscored by the attention and energies that faculty and staff devote to improving student learning experiences associated with high-risk gateway courses. Gateway courses — 100- and 200-level courses with enrollments of 50 or more students in which 25 percent or more earn a grade of D, F, or W — serve as a crucial milestone of progress toward degree completion.57

The Office of the Provost is constantly monitoring DFWI rates. Many ongoing efforts (e.g., IMPACT, Signals, and HORIZONS) are evaluated, in part, on how well they lower these rates. Ongoing efforts center around three areas:

1. Professional development of instructors
2. Enrolling students into courses that are right for them (through excellent academic advising and pre-tests)
3. Giving students early feedback on their progress in the course

Enrolling students in the right classes involves advising and pre-tests. Recently, the Department of Mathematics has instituted an online math pre-test assessment (ALEKS assessment tool) to determine which students are ready for calculus-based courses. Interestingly, this had the effect of putting one-third more students into calculus-based courses. It seems that when students were simply asked if they were good at math, many would say no, and wind up in a class that didn’t challenge them or fit their existing background. Instead, pre-testing helped students choose classes more appropriate to their level, helping more students succeed and even thrive. Again, this model is one that could be replicated in other courses. Through pre-testing, we can give students the help and appropriate level of challenge that they need to succeed.

As described earlier, programs like Course Signals seem to have a strong effect on retention rates. We believe that its success indicates the importance of frequent feedback and helping students understand that someone cares about their performance. Students often feel lost in large lecture courses, and may get the impression that the University doesn’t care if they fail or succeed. In fact, some classes still employ scare tactics, exemplified by the classic “look to your left, look to your right.”

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DFWI rates in Math, for example, began to improve when the classes began to give email feedback to students. Presently in online and night classes, Math is piloting a program in which a paid assistant is mining data from the class to urge students to keep up with homework and let them know that someone is paying attention to their success. Between homework and attendance they are able to gauge which students are at risk. One particularly concerning statistic from this data mining is that more than half of students who retake will still get a DFWI. Here again, students believe they should be doing better than past performance and all indicators suggest they should. This overconfidence is an enormous challenge, in that the students who most need help are often the ones that don’t believe they need it.

Placement

Purdue has always provided excellent resources for helping students outside of class. Purdue is home to the nationally recognized Online Writing Lab (OWL),63 which is used around the world to help improve students’ writing proficiency.

Individual majors, departments, and colleges as well as Admissions work to provide students with the tools they need to succeed before they even get to the classroom, and there are many helpful resources for new students or those new to the major.64 Despite these successes, we identified two challenges in addressing student needs — overconfident students and international students.

While students are proud of the level of education they receive at Purdue, and student answers for the Student Survey questions related to the Learning Dimension were well above the mean, students generally feel they are well-prepared for college. However, the Faculty and Staff Survey reveals that faculty feel at least some students are not as prepared as they think. This lack of awareness is particularly damaging because it causes students who most need remediation to avoid it, sometimes until well after the damage to their GPA and self-confidence has been done.

Additionally, while international students are prepared academically, transitions to the classroom culture are more challenging and may require more targeted interventions. Language and cultural barriers can be quite formidable for students who are far from home.

As to helping students feel challenged, the creation of the Honors College will help implement this more consistently across the University. Again, it is worth noting that programs such as Engineering Projects in Community Service (EPICS), the Center for Authentic Science Practice in Education (CASPIE), and service-learning courses provide unprecedented levels of student engagement and challenge in applying their knowledge outside the traditional classroom, and provide models for other units.

Special Learning Opportunities

While students are generally positive about their education at Purdue, two requests with regard to learning are frequently voiced — “more faculty teaching class rather than GTAs and smaller classes.” These requests would appear to be in conflict, because smaller class sizes are typically achieved by making use of GTAs. Thus, it would appear students could have large lectures with experienced faculty or smaller classes taught by GTAs.

A possible solution to this paradox may lie in the underlying reason for these requests — student fear of getting lost in classes that in some cases are larger than their entire high school. Students transition from small classes and individualized attention in high school to an often confusing world of being both independent from parental supervision and yet still needing guidance. In short, students need to feel that someone cares and that they belong, whether it be through Learning Communities, an advisor, Resident Assistant, GTA, or faculty member. Through special learning opportunities, Purdue has the ability to make the large campus feel smaller and more personal.

Furthermore, these successes should be replicated and extended throughout campus. For example, other programs could benefit from student mentors similar to the successful mentorship within Purdue Promise. Insights from HORIZONS could be applied to increase retention across a broader array of students. Orientation classes could benefit from producing YouTube videos in the same way that other campus entities have.

These examples highlight the fundamental challenge of consistency faced by an organization as large as Purdue. We already do many positive things in select classes, recitations, and areas around the University. The challenge is to popularize these successes and replicate them across campus.

63 Evidence Library #369: Online Writing Lab Web Site. Purdue University.
64 Evidence Library #370: Biology Resource Center Web Site; #371: Chemistry Resource Room Web Site; #372: Math Help Room Web Site. Purdue University.
Recommendations

1. Increase the number of large enrollment courses in the IMPACT program.

2. Provide professional development for instructors of first-year courses.
   - First-year courses and instructors are important, as they set the tone and behaviors for all courses that follow. Many of these courses are also unavoidable and show vast variability in quality.
   - Ensure that graduate instructors who currently teach first-year students have a graduate instruction certificate through CIE.
   - Ensure that departments have required courses taught by instructors who are recognized for their teaching skill.

3. Complete implementation of a University-wide core curriculum.
   - More than half of our students will switch majors during their time at Purdue. It is imperative that some standardization in competencies and curriculum occur. Furthermore, centralized and consistent tracking of student progress on these competencies is necessary.

4. Ensure that students receive an orientation course experience in the first year.
   - Given the large discrepancy between student beliefs about academic preparation and actual preparation reported by faculty, it is clear that enrolling students into a course (or experience, such as Learning Communities) which exposes them to the major and college, and also helps students on fundamental study skills and foundational competencies is a must.

5. Support and expand research on teaching and learning.
   - Given its status as a Research I university, one way to distinctly elevate the quality of education at Purdue is to make a commitment to advancing and rewarding more research on learning and pedagogy at Purdue. With the DLRC, Libraries, School of Engineering Education, and the IMPACT program already having received major grants, blending of Teaching at Purdue with Research on Teaching at Purdue would seem to represent a powerful means to advance the science of teaching and learning and to improve pedagogy.
   - This represents an opportune time to strengthen the connections between researchers with interest in pedagogy and learning and to publicize best practices.

6. Establish, standardize, and publicize University-wide first-year learning goals, in coordination with the core curriculum. These goals should be communicated clearly at BGR, STAR, on the Admissions Facebook page and blog. It must include academic integrity, the Purdue Code of Conduct, and lifelong learning.

7. Provide more and earlier feedback to students on their progress in courses.
   - Given the dramatic gains in retention for students who have taken at least one course with Course Signals, an easy, yet potentially transformative step would be to ensure that more courses adopt Signals or other means of frequent early student feedback.

8. Make large enrollment courses core curriculum foundational courses.
   - Some University oversight of first-year courses is crucial. Our suggested mechanism is the core curriculum and the UCC that would oversee these. This would help ensure that our high enrollment courses have some degree of accountability.

9. Move toward all courses having a clear attendance policy.
   - Students can’t be engaged if they don’t attend class. It is not enough to pass a test; part of the collegiate experience is participation. One of the best ways to fix engagement problems is to make sure students have a reason to be in class. Students that consistently miss class are at much higher risk of dropping out or failing.
Foundations Institutions make the first college year a high priority for the faculty. These institutions are characterized by a culture of faculty responsibility for the first year that is realized through high-quality instruction in first-year classes and substantial interaction between faculty and first-year students both inside and outside the classroom. This culture of responsibility is nurtured by chief academic officers, deans, and department chairs and supported by the institution’s reward systems.65

A Note About the Data Sources

The Foundations of Excellence Faculty and Staff Survey was modified to include institution-specific measures and distributed to 545 faculty and staff members. The survey had 314 respondents (58 percent) in September 2011. Seventy-two respondents (20 percent) were faculty; 106 (34 percent) were administrators, senior leaders, deans or directors; 124 (39 percent) were professional staff; and 11 (four percent) were categorized as other (graduate student, technical/clerical personnel).

The consensus opinion from the Faculty Dimension Committee is that the survey was unsatisfactory. Some questions related to the Faculty Dimension were not specifically reflected in the survey. Additionally, survey design, expectations regarding use, and application of the information gleaned was unsatisfactory. In many cases there was inadequate information regarding the actual respondents to each question, making it difficult to draw sound conclusions. Other concerns included the length of the survey and a belief it was unsatisfactory. It was specifically noted that drawing conclusions from bad data would result in bad conclusions.

Use of information provided through the current practices inventory (CPI) was also challenging. Often information included in the CPI lacked adequate detail to make it applicable in the discussion and decision-making process. The follow-up survey provided additional detail, which was still often inadequate to substantiate sound conclusions.

Given that the data sources were not representative of the task at hand, recommendations are based largely on collective feedback from group members. The committee cautions use of this data to direct action without additional assessment.

We created our own classification to include GTAs. The Foundations of Excellence process assumes faculty are primarily involved with teaching first-year students, but at Purdue, GTAs are routinely used in classroom and laboratory settings, and provide a significant amount of teaching for first-year students. Few departments have the luxury to devote full-time faculty to all first-year classes, which is particularly true within the College of Liberal Arts and the College of Science.

The Faculty Committee noted that many students transfer within Purdue and outside of Purdue, resulting in additional first-year experiences that are not included in this type of assessment. The Committee also perceived an assumption that faculty don’t spend enough time with first-year students. We were unsure of the source of that assumption.

Additionally, the Committee believes that Purdue offers an integrated package of education, and disconnecting other students from first-year students makes little sense in terms of the bigger picture. More emphasis should be placed on the overall educational experience at Purdue, particularly given the fact that four-year graduation is a greater obstacle than retention.

There was consensus that it is important to provide a strong first-year experience for students. How this connects to faculty is less clear. There was a feeling that the Foundations of Excellence process is designed to be carried out more easily in smaller institutions. Given Purdue, its college system, and the independence of the colleges and schools, different first-year experiences may occur depending on the academic unit. With the implementation of a core curriculum there may be opportunity to better identify activities that would most contribute to an excellent first-year experience.

Finally, concerns were raised about the identification of a single answer for the enhancement of all first-year experiences. It should not be overlooked that the diversity Purdue offers across colleges and schools has been a strength.

Overview of Faculty and Staff Survey Responses

The results of the Faculty and Staff Survey for faculty-related questions are listed in the following table.

Table 4-1.
Results of Faculty and Staff Survey – Faculty-related Questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Not at all/ Slight</th>
<th>High/ Very high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what degree is faculty involvement with first-year students considered important by institution leaders – 1</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what degree is faculty involvement with first-year students considered important by department/unit leaders – 2</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what degree is faculty involvement with first-year students considered important by colleagues – 3</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what degree is faculty involvement with first-year students acknowledged, recognized, and/or rewarded by faculty colleagues – 4</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what degree is faculty involvement with first-year students acknowledged, recognized, and/or rewarded by department/unit leader – 5</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what degree is faculty involvement with first-year students acknowledged, recognized, and/or rewarded by institute leader – 6</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the hiring process at this institution, to what degree are faculty responsibilities related to first-year students addressed by means of position descriptions – 7</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the hiring process at this institution, to what degree are faculty responsibilities related to first-year students addressed by candidate interviews – 8</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the new faculty orientation at this institution, to what degree were faculty responsibilities related to first-year students addressed – 9</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Responses were consistent across colleges/schools.
2. Responses were lower for the colleges of Health and Human Sciences and Liberal Arts.
3. Responses were lower for the colleges of Liberal Arts, Agriculture, and Health and Human Sciences.
4. Responses were generally lower for all colleges, with the lowest being the colleges of Liberal Arts, Agriculture, and Science.
5. Responses were generally lower for the colleges of Liberal Arts and Agriculture.
6. Responses were generally lower for all colleges/schools.
7. Responses were high for the College of Engineering and lower for the colleges of Liberal Arts, Agriculture, and Science.
8. Responses were high for the College of Engineering and lower for the colleges of Agriculture and Liberal Arts.
9. Responses were generally low for all colleges/schools.

Teaching First-Year Students as a Priority

In the Faculty and Staff Survey, 252 respondents reported working directly with first-year students and having knowledge of institutional policies and procedures related to first-year students. Seventy-four (29.6 percent) of respondents indicated they had been involved with teaching first-year classes.

The mean response for factors associated with making the first year a priority and the importance of interacting with first-year students was 3.5. Mean responses were greater than 3.0 for all colleges except the College of Liberal Arts (2.8).

General consensus from the survey is that excellence in teaching of first-year students is not acknowledged effectively throughout all colleges/schools. The mean response was 2.6/5.0. The response was lowest for the College of Liberal Arts (2.2) and highest for the College of Engineering (2.82).

The data listed below show that faculty and staff do not significantly believe that excellence in first-year teaching is acknowledged, recognized, and/or rewarded by faculty colleagues, department/unit leaders, and institution leaders.

Q059: To what degree is excellence in teaching first-year students acknowledged, recognized, and/or rewarded by: Faculty colleagues?

- 57.1% reported Not at all (N=18) to Slight (N=26)
- 27.1% reported Moderate (N=19)
- 15.7% reported High (N=5) to Very High (N=11) N=70, Mean=2.41, Std Dev=1.19

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Source: Purdue Foundations of Excellence Task Force.
Q060: To what degree is excellence in teaching first-year students acknowledged, recognized, and/or rewarded by: Department/unit leaders?
42.9% reported Not at all (N=12) to Slight (N=18)
21.4% reported Moderate (N=15)
35.7% reported High (N=13) to Very High (N=12): N=70, Mean=2.93, Std Dev=1.35

Q061: To what degree is excellence in teaching first-year students acknowledged, recognized, and/or rewarded by: Institution leaders?
58.8% reported Not at all (N=18) to Slight (N=22)
25.0% reported Moderate (N=17)
16.2% reported High (N=8) to Very High (N=3): N=56, Mean=2.27, Std Dev=1.26

Concerns with this evidence:
1. Survey questions do not match the three rewards-related items requested in Performance Indicator 4.1. Both ratings include recognitions, acknowledgements, and rewards. “Reward” on the Performance Indicator includes campus-wide recognition and acknowledgement in the campus reward structure (e.g., promotion and tenure, annual salary), whereas the meaning of reward on the survey is unknown.
2. Typically, staff does not have access to promotional and tenure information, nor is the information about how faculty salaries are determined open to the public.
3. Advising first-year students is not often done by faculty at Purdue.
4. No known data is available to assist in assessing substantial out-of-class faculty interaction with first-year students.
5. No known data is available for assessing to what degree the institution makes the first year a priority for faculty teaching assignments.

Campus-Level Encouragement
Data for this question did not seem to be a part of the Purdue data set, so considerations for this factor are based on anecdotal observations and data from a supplemental survey. Coursework for first-year students is built around introductory math, science (i.e., biology, chemistry, physics), English, and orientation classes. Many of the first-year classes are taught using large lectures. The class size and room design is not conducive to using pedagogies of engagement. However, many of these classes also include recitation and laboratory sections that make engagement with the student easier. CIE conducts workshops on ways to improve large lecture classes and these workshops contain several helpful suggestions for improving student engagement. Technologies have been developed to encourage student engagement with tools such as i-clicker, BoilerCast, Adobe Connect, BlackBoard Scholar, Confluence WIKI, HotSeat, Mixable, and Signals. BoilerCast and i-clicker are the oldest of these technologies. While these technologies have some promise for improving first-year student engagement, the adoption is small. To encourage the adoption of student-centered instruction in introductory classes, IMPACT helps faculty with the integration of technology and active learning pedagogies.

The supplemental survey indicates that student engagement goes beyond the classroom. Colleges and some departments have an orientation class that is required of first-year students. These classes introduce students to their professions and inform students of the resources and opportunities that are available to them. Some colleges provide academic study tables or tutors to help students obtain answers to their coursework questions. There are welcome events at the beginning of the year provided by many departments that allow first-year students to become better acquainted with faculty members. The creation of Learning Communities is another method that has been developed to engage students.

The reliance on large lecture sections for many first-year classes makes the use of pedagogies of engagement difficult to adopt. Technology aids are still new. They may help to increase student engagement in the future, but at the time adoption rates are low.

To what degree do senior academic leaders encourage faculty to understand the campus-wide learning goals for the first year?
This is rather difficult to address, since at the onset of the Foundations of Excellence process Purdue did not have a core undergraduate curriculum. Apart from retention, it is unclear that there are measurable campus-wide learning goals. The results to the questions below seem to confirm that perception. It is interesting, however, that there is a greater perception that departments/units operate with a common philosophy for first year. The validity of this data does seem questionable, as only 58 faculty members University-wide responded to these questions.

Q011. The following questions will ask your perceptions regarding first-year students at your institution. Philosophy (a rationale that guides educational goals and practices) — To what degree: Has an institutional philosophy for the first/freshman year of college been communicated to you?
246 respondents, mean score 2.52

Q013. The following questions will ask your perceptions regarding first-year students at your institution. Philosophy (a rationale that guides educational goals and practices) — To what degree: Does this institution operate from a commonly held philosophy for the first/freshman year?
233 respondents, mean score 2.44

Q014. The following questions will ask your perceptions regarding first-year students at your institution. Philosophy (a rationale that guides educational goals and practices) — To what degree: Does your department/unit operate from a commonly held philosophy for the first/freshman year?
241 respondents, mean score 3.49
From the Deans and Department Heads Survey, it is clear that all colleges that participated have some program that targets at least a portion of the first-year student population. The support for such programs indicates academic unit leaders clearly support efforts for first-year students.

To what degree do senior academic leaders (e.g., vice presidents, deans) encourage faculty to understand the characteristics of first-year students at this campus?

We have three main sources of data for this Performance Indicator — the Faculty and Staff Survey, the follow-up Deans and Department Heads Survey, and the CPI. Few, if any, of the questions ask about this specific issue. Very little of the data can be disaggregated from the whole and related directly to understanding of senior academic leaders of the characteristics of first-year students at Purdue. Any finding from this dataset to address this criterion would be mostly inference and/or extrapolation, because it is not clear if the responses are from or directed to senior academic leaders.

**RELATED FOE SURVEY DATA**

[D001] 106 of 313 respondents (33.9 percent) to the Foundations of Excellence survey identified themselves as senior academic leaders (may include department and unit heads).

[D002] 252 of 293 respondents (senior academic leaders and all others, 86 percent total) claim knowledge of institutional practices and policies regarding the first year of college.

Institutional philosophy could indicate a shared, base understanding of first-year students. The majority of respondents think this philosophy is important [Q011]; however, the majority does not think it has been communicated to them [Q013].

One could extrapolate from awareness and understanding of the top three programs [Q18] and most successful approaches [Q19] that address first-year experience an understanding of the characteristics of first-year students. Participation in these programs or utilization of these approaches could possibly be correlated with better understanding of first-year experience and characteristics of first-year students; however, this is not established in the study.

Questions that relate to sub-populations provide some evidence of characterizing first-year students and identifying/addressing special needs that groups of them may have: honors [Q036], academic deficiencies [Q037], learning disabilities [Q038], physical disabilities [Q039], athletes [Q040], minorities [Q041], high school students [Q042], and international students [Q08].

Many questions address needs that may reflect an understanding of characteristics of first-year students, although their data may not directly: students’ preparedness to handle the academic demands of college [OC1], co-curricular involvement [OQ2], financial management [OQ3], time management [OQ4], physical well-being [OQ5], mental wellness [OQ6], and diverse interactions [OQ7].

Research and dissemination of research [QC10] on first-year experience and departments acting on it [QC11] would suggest an understanding of characteristics of first-year students as they would be the target of such research.

The summative question for this criterion may be, “To what degree does Purdue provide useful information regarding the educational characteristics of first-year students to faculty and staff?” [OQ29], to which a majority (54.5 percent) responded “Not At All” or “Slight” and only 8.7 percent responded “Well” or “Very Well.”

**RELATED FOLLOW-UP SURVEY DATA**

The follow-up survey of deans and department heads was conducted with questions from the Committees; 14 of 64 respondents identified themselves as being deans or representing deans. This population is a closer match for this criterion than the Faculty and Staff Survey. The survey was branched, but it is not clear from the report which questions were answered by senior academic administrators. Some questions have only six or seven responses (either these were branched to deans or the completion rate of the survey was very low). We request branching information to separate responses of senior academic leaders.

Faculty who completed the survey indicated that they believe Purdue prioritizes understanding the needs and characteristics of first-year students, but it is not communicated to the individual faculty level. There appears to be a disconnect in communicating the message. Expecting the faculty to extract information from the Data Digest is unrealistic.

The follow-up survey showed training and structures for GTAs were well done, but less so for new faculty. Perhaps there is an assumption associated with title (faculty versus non-faculty). Greater attention should be paid to mentoring faculty teaching across the University.

As discussed, much of the teaching for first-year students is in large lecture-type classes that are not conduciive to pedagogies of engagement. CIE offers instruction and assistance for individuals teaching large classes to make them more engaging. IT has sought to bring technology to the large classroom. These techniques have worked in some classrooms. Adoption appears to be fairly low. Efforts are being made, but significant opportunities remain.
To what degree do unit-level academic administrators encourage faculty to use pedagogies of engagement in first-year courses, understand unit-level learning goals for entry-level courses, understand discipline-specific trends and issues related to entry-level courses?

Two respondents to the Deans and Department Heads Survey defined the first-year experience, as reflected below:

“We define first-year experience as a combination of curricular and co-curricular activities and efforts aimed at new students (primarily first-year students) that are focused on these students’ academic success, personal and developmental well-being, and eventually lead to their graduation.” (College of Agriculture)

“First-year experience is defined as an opportunity to orient students to the chosen fields, get involved in related activities on campus and in the community, and meet students in their majors.” (Unknown)

Given the lack of consensus between the two respondents and lack of definitions from other colleges/schools, Purdue may wish to define and disseminate expectations for the first-year experience and disseminate the expectation.

Several colleges/schools target first-year students through their programs, including curriculum. Examples of responses are as follows:

- Supplemental Instruction, peer mentoring, Academic Boot Camp, BEST (tutoring), A-game, Learning Communities, and miscellaneous department initiatives.
- Through our efforts in MANRRS and working closely with the College of Agriculture Office of Multicultural Programs
- Most of our units have the introductory course for the unit that introduces students to their professions. We typically have some sort of welcome event that is marketed to all faculty and new students. We use Parents Day for this as well. We do less now than we used to because of STAR, BGR, and the Common Reading Program.
- Two Learning Communities; orientation where faculty are asked to volunteer and participate in orientation discussion groups at the beginning of the year; student organizations advised by faculty representatives; Read to Succeed community outreach effort promoted through email and announcements within departments.
- We have a pre-semester program for students that builds science and math skills as well as study skills.

The supplemental survey also identified certain student sub-populations including women and underrepresented minorities, Students in Education Enhancing Diversity (SEEED), DeVito, Presidential and Trustee Scholars, FEELS students (Food, Environment, Engineering, Life Sciences), and HORIZON students.

Reported metrics of success beyond first-year retention rates for students include the percentage of students participating in various programs, successful entry into the professional program and feedback from a survey of entering first-year students (administered for more than 25 years).

Staff identified as specifically dedicated to first-year students include Director of Diversity (aimed at women and underrepresented minorities), Academic Excellence Coordinator (retention), Honors Program, and Pathway to Purdue program.

Programs cited that encourage faculty involvement in the first-year experience include Learning Communities, some department-specific initiatives (not specifically listed), and a Leadership program. It was noted that promoting faculty involvement in the first-year experience would have to include recognition and rewards for such activities. Faculty that are currently involved tend to be more senior faculty that understand and appreciate the value and role of undergraduate students at Purdue.

The percentage of total faculty reported to teach first-year students ranged from zero percent to 45 percent, with significant variability among departments. The total number of faculty reported to teach first-year students was 136. Recognizing our supplemental survey is not a comprehensive view of the University in total, given the relatively small numbers of individuals reported to teach first year students, initiatives targeted at those individuals could be considered.

Unit-Level Encouragement: To what degree do unit-level academic administrators encourage faculty to do the following?

Use pedagogies of engagement in first-year courses

Two core requirements are included in the plans of study for almost all Purdue first-year students: ENGL 10600 – First-Year Composition, or ENGL 10800 – Accelerated Composition, and COM 11400 – Fundamentals of Speech Communication. All of these courses are taught in small sections (enrollment is capped at 28 in COM 11400, at 20 in ENGL 10600/10800), so they are designed with pedagogies of engagement in mind and typically include such activities as oral presentations, discussion, group projects, etc. Almost none of the sections of these courses are taught by full-time tenure-track faculty; rather, course sections are taught primarily by GTAs and limited-term lecturers, along with some continuing lecturers.

The first-year experience for students in each college is difficult to assess. Students in the College of Liberal Arts (which has 4,256 undergraduates as of fall 2011) often take courses that have smaller enrollments (under 40 students), which are more easily designed to employ pedagogies of engagement. Furthermore, all College of Liberal Arts undergraduates are required to meet proficiency in a foreign language, so they are likely to experience a highly interactive course in their first year. The College of Engineering (which has 7,087 undergraduates as of fall 2011) is the largest college at Purdue and is noteworthy for requiring ENGR 13100-13200 – Transforming Ideas to Innovation I
and II (or the honors equivalent) for all first-year students. This course is designed to involve interactive problem-solving activities and collaborative group work, and is typically taught by full-time faculty. The College of Health and Human Sciences is the second largest college at Purdue (4,547 undergraduates as of fall 2011), but does not have a college-wide core curriculum, so it is difficult to assess the first-year experience for their students. These three colleges together have 15,890 undergraduates, or 51.6 percent of all undergraduates at Purdue, so any initiatives that involve these colleges will have impact for their college-wide core curriculum, so it is difficult to assess the first-year experience for their students.

Honors offerings for first-year students are substantial across the University. The University Honors Program offers five sections of a first-year seminar (HONR 19900) per semester, all on a unique and provocative topic, taught by full-time faculty, and with enrollment limits that allow for significant interaction and discussion. Several colleges and departments also offer honors seminars for their first-year students: the College of Science (SCI 11000), First-Year Engineering (ENGR 10500), Biology (BIOL 19700), Computer Science (CS 19500), and others. The launch of the University Honors College in fall 2013 will further enhance the first-year experience for high-performing incoming students by bringing them into direct contact with inspiring faculty.

**Understand unit-level learning goals for entry-level courses**

Assessing the commitment to setting unit-level learning goals in courses for first-year students is complicated. The tiered sections developed for core courses for first-year students at Purdue in the departments of Chemistry and Mathematics offer one means of measuring this objective. Chemistry offers different levels of the first-year course, designed with specific student constituencies in mind: CHM 11100-11200 (General Chemistry for non-College of Science students), CHM 11500-11600 (General Chemistry I and II), CHM 12300-12400 (General Chemistry for Engineers I and II), CHM 12500-12600 (Intro to Chemistry I and II), and CHM 13500-13600 (General Chemistry Honors). Similarly, Math offers several different versions of the first-year Calculus course sequence: MA 16100-16200 (Plane Analytic Geometry and Calculus I and II), MA 16500 (Analytic Geometry and Calculus I), MA 17300 (Calculus And Analytic Geometry II), MA 18100-18200H (Honors Calculus I and II), MA 22100-22200 (Calculus for Technology I and II), and MA 23100-23200 (Calculus for the Life Sciences I and II).

In addition, the composition requirement for first-year students has options to meet student needs and interest. ENGL 10600 is the regular course that most students take, but there are also dedicated sections for international students (ENGL 10600 I), as well as 26 sections of the course tied into various Learning Communities initiatives. High-performing students are eligible to take ENGL 10800, a course that combines composition and service-learning or community engagement.

One institutional change in recent years also relates to this criteria. The Registrar’s Office revised Form 40, which is used to approve new courses and revise courses, in order to include information about specific learning outcomes and goals for every course. This institutional change could be helpful in communicating the need for faculty to be very clear about designing a course syllabus that matches the outcomes on file for any given course.

**Understand the discipline-specific trends and issues related to entry-level courses**

IMPACT shows that there is administrative encouragement at Purdue for making sure that entry-level courses are up-to-date in dealing with current issues and disciplinary trends. Twenty courses have been selected for re-design in 2012-13, and that number will increase to thirty courses for the 2013-14 year. Common first-year courses being redesigned during the current academic year include CHM 11500 and 11600, MA 15400, BIOL 13100, POL 10100, and PSY 12000. The goal is to transform courses that enroll a sizable number of undergraduates in such a way that they employ “a more enhanced student-centered approach that is informed by research and aimed at enhancing student learning, competence, and confidence” — goals in keeping with our engaged pedagogies criteria as well.

First-year students at Purdue also can participate in Learning Communities, as described earlier. For 2011-12, Purdue is offering 43 unique Learning Communities (63 total Learning Communities), with approximately 1,663 first-year students participating. The program has the capacity to serve up to 2,000 undergraduates, which would allow approximately one-third of all first-year students to participate. For the 130 course sections offered through the Learning Communities program this year, the number of sections taught by tenure-track or tenured faculty is 25 percent, lecturers is 11 percent, GTAs is 38 percent, and staff is 26 percent.

Events for Learning Communities involve fun events related to students’ academic interests, service projects, socials, and opportunities to interact with faculty and staff involved in different areas of academic interest. This proves beneficial, as there is a closer relationship between the faculty and staff and first-year students. The students can learn more from the faculty and staff, while employees can also receive direct feedback from students. An important note is that the feedback is being received as the classes are being taught, not having to rely on feedback from the class in a previous semester and not at the end of the semester when no action can be taken. Because Purdue has shown a commitment to growing the number of Learning Communities offered and increasing capacity for first-year students, we see this commitment as evidence that there is unit-level and administrative encouragement for making sure that entry-level courses fulfill “discipline-specific trends” and meet “learning goals” that are coordinated across courses and departments.
Further Context: The Pedagogical Challenge

Attempting to improve student success vis-à-vis peer institutions is a challenge, in part, because as a land-grant institution, Purdue appears to be less selective in its admission practices. Consider the SAT data for the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) universities below.

Table 4-2.
SAT Scores for Admission to the Big Ten. 57

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading 25%</th>
<th>Reading 75%</th>
<th>Math 25%</th>
<th>Math 75%</th>
<th>Writing 25%</th>
<th>Writing 75%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>780</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan State</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwestern</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>780</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio State</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penn State</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purdue</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>670</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since success in higher education reflects, in part, the preparedness of incoming first-year students, we expect that some percentage of first-year students will not be retained, and many will not complete an undergraduate program in a timely fashion, possibly ever.

Consequently, the faculty faces an important challenge, especially since the number of tenure-track faculty is in decline. To meet the large enrollments, many departments have no choice but to offer introductory courses in very large sections. Some of our colleges (e.g., Engineering) have established first-year programs that meet the needs of first-year students. However, most of our colleges do not.

Our feeling overall is that Purdue does an adequate to good job of providing first-year students with diverse educational environments (especially given our enrollment numbers and constrained resources). We offer some instruction in large lectures, but also offer many small class discussion-based classes. Some of the classes are led by faculty, while others are led by enthusiastic GTAs and lecturers.

Overall, consensus is that there is no reward for faculty to focus on the first-year teaching. It was noted there are a number of different types of recognition programs within the University focused on teaching excellence. These do not differentiate first-year teaching. The promotion and tenure document utilized University-wide includes a learning section.

Purdue understands and values teaching. There is clear evidence that faculty members must be competent teachers to be promoted and/or tenured. The relationship between the merit salary process and faculty interaction with first-year students should be clarified.

There is a reward in the form of a small stipend for faculty who are associated with Learning Communities. Engagement with first-year students is frequently included on activity reports used in the merit-salary process.

To what degree are expectations for involvement with first-year students clearly communicated to newly hired full-time faculty, newly hired part-time/adjunct instructors, continuing full-time and part-time adjunct faculty?

Incorporation of expectations for involvement with first-year students into the hiring and orientation process was generally rated low with an overall mean of 2.4/5.0. The response was lowest for the College of Liberal Arts (1.89) and highest for the College of Engineering (4.0).

The Deans and Department Heads Survey helped us to better understand ways expectations about teaching first-year students have been communicated to faculty. A summary of responses is shown in the table below.

Table 4-3.
Summary of responses to Deans and Department Heads Survey. 68

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Communication</th>
<th>Percent of Respondents Applying Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>End-of-course feedback</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-on-one meetings</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for Instructional Excellence</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Pedagogic orientation sessions, guidance from Undergraduate Program Coordinator)</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assigned mentors</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty seminars</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thirty-six percent of respondents indicated communication is different with newly hired faculty who have responsibilities for teaching first-year students than with continuing faculty with similar responsibilities while 64 percent of respondents indicated no difference.


68 Purdue Foundations of Excellence Task Force.
Various processes were reported for selection, training, monitoring, and providing feedback to part-time/adjunct instructors teaching first-year students. A total of 29 individuals serving in this capacity were identified through the survey. The methods in the following table were reported to communicate expectations to continuing faculty with similar responsibilities, while 78 percent of respondents indicated no difference.

Table 4-4.
Summary of responses to Deans and Department Heads Survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Communication</th>
<th>Percent of Respondents Applying Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other (Support group, course orientation sessions and materials, faculty and lecturers serving as coordinators for instruction)</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End-of-course feedback</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-on-one meetings</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assigned mentors</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for Instructional Excellence</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twenty-two percent of respondents indicated communication is different with newly hired faculty who have responsibilities for teaching first-year students than with continuing faculty with similar responsibilities, while 78 percent of respondents indicated no difference.

In addition to faculty and part-time/adjunct instructors, GTAs also teach first-year students. Departments reported that a range of zero to 100 percent of GTAs teach first-year students, with significant variability among departments. A total of 370 individuals serving as GTAs were reported as teaching first-year students through this survey.

Various processes were reported for selection, training, monitoring, and providing feedback to GTAs who provide instruction for first-year students. These include:

- Working with an experienced faculty mentor who trains, monitors, and provides feedback
- Individuals are chosen from among the most academically accomplished doctoral students to provide them with exposure to teaching as a possible career
- Teaching workshops
- Observation of teaching videos; review of teaching audiotapes
- Teaching seminars; uniform required GTA orientation (two days) prior to the start of the fall semester; intense two-week sessions before first class with required meetings, feedback sessions and classroom observation

GTAs in our department do not teach first-year students in a classroom setting, but manage help sessions, hold office hours, and grade assignments; others coordinate laboratory sessions.

Lead faculty identify graduate students who know the material and are patient communicators; graduate performance is evaluated before selection.

Graduate students are asked about interest in teaching; they are encouraged to complete the Graduate Teacher Certificate Program.

Faculty coordinators select and mentor teaching assistants.

Respondents shared the following information regarding differences in the process for selection, training, monitoring, and providing feedback between faculty and/or part-time/adjunct instructors versus teaching assistants.

- Some departments do not use newly hired faculty to teach first-year students
- Faculty training often includes teaching workshops which may be encouraged to a greater degree if student evaluations or peer review suggest additional mentoring is required.
- Some departments use a similar process for new instructors, but not those who are experienced.
- Faculty are encouraged to use resources available through the CIE
- The process for orienting faculty/instructors is far less rigorous than for GTAs.

To what degree are expectations for involvement with first-year students clearly communicated to the following groups?

1. Newly hired full-time faculty
2. Newly hired part-time/adjunct instructors
3. Continuing full-time and part-time adjunct faculty

Concerns with this Performance Indicator include:

1. Faculty at Purdue are not typically hired just to teach first-year courses.
2. There may be confusion about the definition of “first-year courses” as opposed to “foundational” courses.
3. The questions have inherent ambiguity. They imply that all faculty will be involved with first-year students, whereas the expectation might be that the faculty member or adjunct instructor in question might never be expected to teach foundational or first-year courses.
4. There was no mention of our process to communicate expectations to the group that teaches many of the first-year courses at Purdue: graduate instructors.
5. It is too restrictive to focus just on the first-year experience, when we anticipate good teaching at all levels.

50 Ibid.
We used information from questions 70, 71, and 73 to help grade our performance indicators.

Q70 asked how the institution relayed informed incoming faculty about responsibilities related to first-year students during the hiring process. The mean response for this question was 2.27. More than half of the respondents said that the institution performed this at the level of “slight” or not at all. It does not appear that this is addressed very often at the University, college, or departmental level during the hiring process.

The Committee did not feel this was a big shortcoming, since very few newly hired faculty would have primary responsibility for first-year students.

Q71 sought to determine to what responsibilities for first-year students are conveyed during the candidate interviews. The mean for this question was 2.51, with the majority again finding this was done at the level of “Slight” or “Not at All.” Again, the Committee did not find this a significant shortcoming.

Q73 asked about how responsibilities for first-year students are conveyed during new faculty orientation. The mean response for this question was 2.29 and more than 60 percent believed the University was functioning at the “Slight” or “Not at All” level.

There is very little evidence that concerns of first-year students are addressed, although a representative from the Provost’s Office reported:

“At New Faculty Orientation, the Vice President of Student Affairs and the Vice Provost for Academic Undergraduate Affairs addresses the group and talks about the characteristics of first-year students on our campus.”

The Committee was unsure about what types of characteristics are presented by the Vice President of Student Affairs and the Vice Provost for Academic Undergraduate Affairs in these presentations, but there was some concern that certain types of presentations can actually create stereotypes and minimize the abilities of incoming students (e.g., the Beloit College list 70 that attempts to understand the “mindset” of 18-year olds). That said, information regarding the characteristics of first-year students should be shared more broadly, particularly with department heads who are the closest “leaders” to those faculty and staff actually interacting with first year students. Rather than explanations of student “mindsets,” our focus could be on behaviors that we already know are common. For example, first-year students are often overwhelmed and require guidance, but do not acknowledge their uncertainty or seek assistance. Many first-year students do not take advantage of office hours and tutorial services because of fear and/or a perceived associated stigma. Reminding faculty and staff of the likelihood of such behaviors could be help in planning curriculum, in encouraging students to pursue opportunities for assistance, and in terms of developing more targeted services and programming.

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Additional information from the Deans and Department Heads Survey
The Committee needed more information than questions 70, 71, and 73 provided, so through we asked for the following:

1. How many of their faculty have primary responsibility for first-year students?
2. What percentage of their total faculty have primary responsibility to teach first-year students?
3. How do they communicate expectations about first-year students to these faculty members?
4. Do they communicate differently with newly hired faculty as opposed to continuing faculty, and if so, how?

Responses indicate that very few faculty members are hired specifically to teach beginning students. Of those who do have faculty teaching first-year students, processes for communicating with them about how to work with this group of students varies widely. For those deans and department heads who responded, about half do not have any formal way of communicating about first-year students with faculty. For those who did respond, several mentioned using the CIE. Several mentioned newly hired faculty do not need any specific mentoring related to teaching first-year students.

Added questions about GTAs
The Committee felt strongly that we needed to analyze the role of GTAs in courses heavily subscribed by first-year students. Specifically, we wanted to know the current processes for selecting, training, monitoring, and offering feedback and evaluation about teaching to graduate students, so we asked deans and department heads similar questions to those above about GTAs.

We discovered that there are rich and varied processes across programs to train GTAs. These processes included:

- Teaching workshops
- Mentors Teaching seminars
- Intensive training before classes start
- Weekly meetings
- Training programs monitored by faculty
- Teaching observation
- Course evaluations

The grades for communicating with newly hired full-time faculty, communicating with newly hired part-time/adjunct instructors, and communicating with continuing full-time and part-time adjunct faculty were low. The Committee did not find this to be a significant problem, since a small percentage of these groups are tasked with working solely or even primarily with first-year students. The low weight we gave to these segments conveys the committee’s relative lack of concern about these questions, and the low ratings should not suggest that we use University resources to address these areas.

The committee realizes that GTAs were not included in this Performance Indicator, but after much discussion, we decided that GTAs are used so widely for first-year courses (English 106, Communication 114, Math 153-4, etc.) that it would be inappropriate to exclude the preparation that colleges, schools, departments, and programs give GTAs.

Recommendations

1. Prioritize repair, renovate, and construct of classrooms that facilitate creative/innovative pedagogies of engagement, given the lack of flexibility in most classrooms (immobile furnishings).

2. Encourage colleges to develop a longitudinal approach to curricular and co-curricular delivery that accounts for transition points (e.g., first year, CODO, senior year, co-op) within the student population.

3. Maintain a plan for GTA training, mentoring, and feedback for each department that uses GTAs for instruction in first-year classes.

4. Implement a systematic approach to mentor faculty who provide teaching in foundation courses for first-year students. All first-time or new-to-profession faculty members should have a teaching mentor. Take advantage of existing resources including the Teaching Academy, CIE, and University orientation for new faculty to share information about the instructional needs of first-year students and best practices associated with teaching.

5. Provide supplemental funding for creative, curricular-related events and activities to augment classroom for first-year student-intensive courses.

6. Communicate faculty efforts targeting first-year students. Use the most promising initiatives to help further involve faculty to enhance the first-year experience for Purdue students. IMPACT, Learning Communities, the founding of the University Honors College, residential faculty fellows, and the establishment of a University-wide core curriculum offer significant possibilities.

7. Develop and communicate a high-level philosophy for the first-year experience for students.

Communication Methods

The extent to which Purdue effectively communicates the lived experience of students varies greatly by the method of communication.

The Purdue Website and Online Communication Tools

The Purdue website does not contain a section specifically designed for prospective or first-year students. The link for Student Life from the Purdue homepage does not contain stories about students’ experiences. Overall, it is challenging for both internal audiences (e.g., current students) and external audiences (e.g., prospective students) to find all of the necessary information related to the first-year experience. Currently, searches on the website bring up archived news stories rather than links to specific departments, units, or relevant campus information. Search engines such as Google provide more direct routes than the search function on the Purdue homepage. The website appears to contain useful information, but finding relevant information can be a challenge.

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Purdue’s decentralized nature contributes to the challenges related to the navigation of the website, although there has been some improvement with a recent move to a standardized web template. Because staff find it so difficult to navigate the overall website, they often develop their own websites. This process of duplication creates significant problems in terms of the consistency and reliability of information.

In terms of other online communication technologies, Purdue has an official Facebook page, Twitter feed, RSS news feed, iPhone app, and YouTube channel prominently featured on the homepage. In addition, the Office of Admissions creates a Facebook page for each incoming class, and hosts chat events in which different groups (e.g., prospective students, admitted students, the campus community, and parents) have the opportunity to ask questions.

At a University level, Purdue takes advantage of the latest online communication technologies and continues to make improvements. While centralized units such as Marketing & Media and Admissions provide some services and resources to facilitate coordination of online communication for recruitment and enrollment, there remains a significant variability across campus. Purdue units typically work independently in the development of their online communication. For example, many individual colleges, schools, and student organizations have their own Facebook pages.

Campus Tours
The Purdue Recruitment Council, which includes Admissions, Colleges and Schools, Marketing, and Intercollegiate Athletics, coordinates undergraduate recruitment messaging. Trained student guides from Admissions and the Visitor’s Information Center offer on-campus tours to prospective students, their teachers, and parents. Student tour guides from Admissions must have experience living in a residence hall and experience with campus activities. Some colleges, departments, and residence halls also offer tours to prospective students. Academic departments can also develop their own presentation material, consistent with the Council’s messaging. For example, the College of Engineering and the School of Management offer special information sessions to complement Admissions’ daily campus tours. In addition, full-day Admissions campus visit programs allow students to attend multiple academic interest sessions. Marketing & Media is currently working on a virtual tour of campus.

Lack of resources does not allow for a dedicated full-time staff person for recruiting, training, and overseeing the process of campus tours. While there is a central coordination of official campus tours for prospective students, there is anecdotal evidence that ad hoc tours occur and that even the centrally coordinated tours could be enhanced if student tour guides better reflected the diversity of our student population. (e.g., race, ethnicity, majors). Also, because of Purdue’s size and the variety of academic programs, centralized campus tours are unable to provide a comprehensive overview of all academic programs.

Communications to Students

Institutional Mission
As described earlier, Purdue’s institutional mission is clearly articulated and embedded across campus. Despite that, first-year students often experience difficulty in finding the University’s mission. Elements of the mission are integrated into Admissions print material, but indirectly. Colleges and departments tend to market and recruit based on their individual missions rather than the institutional mission.

A question arose regarding what is the best way to integrate the institutional mission into college and department missions. College- and department-level material includes some reference to college missions, but little mention of the institutional mission. Does college level material need to include the institutional mission? Could the elements of the institutional mission be attractive to include in college level recruitment and marketing material?

Academic Integrity
Students appear to know the academic- and integrity-related expectations of Purdue, which are referenced in course syllabi by University regulation, and are also located on college and department websites. In addition, STAR presentations and BGR address both of these issues. As indicated by the differing means in the survey results, staff and faculty are less confident than are students about students’ awareness of integrity issues.

Table 5-1. Survey Results – Academic Integrity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Staff/Faculty M</th>
<th>Students M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication of importance of academic standards of behavior</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication of importance of academic honesty</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>4.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication of importance of acknowledging the source of ideas not their own</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>4.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication of importance of ethical conduct</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

73 Evidence Library #50. EDPS 10500 Syllabus; #113: Ag – Honors Freshman Seminar Syllabus; #222: USP STAR Student Presentation; #229: Ag STAR Presentation; #270: PY Engineering STAR Presentation; #299: Vet Tech STAR Presentation; #300: Management STAR Presentation; #48: USP Web Site; #121: Ag – Dean’s Scholars/Honors Web Site; #192: SATS Purdue Promise First-Year Agreement; #193: SATS Purdue Promise EUI, First-Year Agreement; #275: PSEF Tour Guide Handbook; #159: Paying for Purdue Publication and Web Site; #163: Paying for Purdue Orientation at STAR; Get Involved Web Site http://www.getinvolved.purdue.edu/ (accessed July 11, 2012); Division of Financial Aid Web Site http://www.purdue.edu/dfa/ (accessed July 11, 2012). Purdue University.

74 Q021. M = 3.86, SD = .93

75 Source: Purdue Foundations of Excellence Task Force.
Students are sometimes surprised by the rigorous academic standards on campus. They appear to come to campus with an understanding that Purdue will be demanding, but when they arrive they experience more challenges than they had anticipated. Students often come from situations where they were one of only a few high performers and when they come to Purdue they are now just one of many high performers.

Purdue has the second largest population of international students of all United States public institutions. Integrity-issues (e.g., plagiarism) are nuanced and often vary by culture. Therefore, we need to better communicate with international students about integrity-related issues prior to their arrival on campus. It is important to note that Purdue’s Office of International Students and Scholars (ISS) provides critical support services such as pre-arrival information, a semester-based newsletter, social events, and international parent events.

**Engagement Opportunities**

Information regarding out-of-class engagement opportunities is available in Admissions print material, campus tours, college- and department-level recruitment material, STAR, and through the Get Involved website. Respondents to the Foundations of Excellence Student Survey indicated that Purdue provided opportunities for them to get involved in out-of-class activities.76

The Get Involved website is difficult to use; it is hard to locate specific information. The “Mortar Board” printed calendar, which lists call-out meetings at the beginning of each semester introducing a club and membership requirements, features only organizations that contribute content. Mortar Board is sold at all bookstores and is purchased by most students on campus. Out of the more than 900 student clubs, only about one-third of the call-outs are listed in the Mortar Board. An opportunity would be to focus a staff member’s efforts on increasing the number of call-outs listed and improving the usefulness of the Get Involved website.

**Jobs and Work**

Students are encouraged to work on-campus by offices such as Admissions, the Division of Financial Aid, and Residential Life, but often the disadvantages of working are not addressed. In addition, little information is offered to students regarding the advantages and/or disadvantages of working off campus. It is important to note that 78.6 percent of students who responded to the Student Survey indicated that they did not have a paying job.

**Admissions Requirements**

Recruitment messaging at Purdue emphasizes the academic challenge and effort expected of students, coupled with the programs and services that enhance student success. Admissions requirements also help convey the University’s expectations. For example, beginning in 2011, Purdue became one of very few universities in the country that require four years of college preparatory mathematics for first-year admission.77

With regard to entry requirements for specific majors, Purdue uses a holistic approach. Primary emphasis, however, is on the complete academic record — grades in core academic courses, the trend of those grades, and the rigor of the elected curriculum relative to the offerings available to the student. Prospective students are strongly encouraged to pursue advanced placement, international baccalaureate, and dual enrollment courses if these opportunities are available to them.78

Additionally, students are most often admitted to a specific college rather than to the institution. The testing and GPA requirements for each college can be found on their respective websites, but multiple factors are considered in the admissions process. The information regarding entry requirements is communicated as accurately and detailed as possible, considering the complex and dynamic nature of the process. Students reported receiving effective communication regarding available academic majors prior to attending Purdue.79

**Change of Degree Objective**

Because Purdue admits students to specific academic programs rather than offering general admission to the University, the entry requirements vary based on the applicant’s desired major. While students and families seem to understand the basic academic requirements for admission to Purdue, they do not always understand that a student who meets these basic requirements might not be a strong enough candidate for admission to a highly competitive major. In addition, the fluid nature of CODO requirements can create barriers and frustration for students working to switch from one major to another.

Colleges and departments have the freedom to use CODO requirements to manage enrollment numbers. While said CODO requirements can be found on the college websites, they are not always current or accurate, and can also change while students are working toward entrance into specific majors (i.e., moving targets). The fluid nature of these requirements is a function of colleges working to maintain specific levels of enrollment.

76 Q031. M = 3.75, SD = 1.05


78 Ibid.

79 Q022. M = 4.20, SD = .87
Financial Aid

Students receive effective communication about college costs and financial aid during recruitment from Admissions at STAR and also from individual colleges, departments, and units. Information regarding how to complete financial aid forms is readily available on the Division of Financial Aid website. Students reported receiving a moderate amount of information regarding financial aid opportunities, tuition and living expenses.

Financial Aid sends two direct student emails to all admitted students and upper-class students in late January and mid-February as reminders to file the next year FAFSA. The FAFSA processor also sends reminders to students who filed the FAFSA the previous year to file again for the next year. Financial Aid also runs three ads (mid-late February) in the student newspaper, the Exponent, to encourage students to file the FAFSA before the March 1 priority filing date, and also provides an information table for Purdue students in Stewart Center (and even at the local mall) as part of financial literacy outreach efforts (e.g., National Endowment for Financial Education, 40 Monday Management Tips Every College Student Should Know). Students in programs such as Purdue Promise and HORIZONS take specialized orientation and support courses that provide additional information on financial aid and literacy. Much of the material presented in these courses is provided in collaboration with the Division of Financial Aid.

Responders to the Faculty and Staff Survey viewed first-year students as underprepared to face issues such as handling financial management, time management, and mental wellness. However, they also indicated that such topics were not likely to be addressed in courses in which first-year students are enrolled.

Transitions

Purdue uses BGR as a primary mode of communication regarding many transition-related issues. As indicated in the open-ended response of faculty, staff and students, BGR tends to be highly valued. However, BGR is not required for all students and international students are rarely able to attend. In addition, students are overwhelmed with information at BGR and are not likely to view the material as salient or relevant to their immediate transition. Common phrases during Committee meetings included “students don’t know what they don’t know” and “the expectation is often that students already know the expectations.”

Connections with Families

Purdue depends a great deal on STAR for communicating with families about institutional expectations and procedures and including them in the process of orientation. STAR is required for domestic students, but not for international students. Many Purdue colleges and schools welcome families to join (as observers) their students in initial academic advising sessions and in meetings about housing. In addition, families are a secondary audience for printed material for first-year students and can also sign up for family emails and the Facebook page. Families of admitted students are invited to the Purdue Parent Facebook page, which includes topics such as campus expectations and procedures. SATS Twenty-First Century Scholars material indicates a high level of communication with families regarding expectations and procedures.

Families are included in a variety of ways on campus after their students have been admitted. Examples include the Residential Life Parent E-Newsletter, opt-in student newsletters at the college-level, the Purdue Parent Calendar, and SATS emails to parents.

In contrast to the Committee’s generally positive impressions, first-year students indicated a moderate level regarding how much Purdue helped their family feel a part of their college experience.

STAR includes both general and college- and department-level sessions, but there is currently no consistency in the structure (e.g., types of material presented) of college-level meetings. Coordination efforts are being explored. Purdue does not have centralized coordination or a collection of family opportunities (e.g., information and advising sessions, communications materials), and it is challenging to determine the extent to which these activities take place on campus.

Purdue could utilize existing documents to create a document for families focused on the idea of being partners in building their child’s independence (e.g., NODA — National Orientation Directors Association and NACADA — National Academic Advising Association). Such a document could encourage families to support their child while also encouraging their child to develop self-advocacy skills. It might also include an outline, timeline, or flowchart for families regarding what types of assistance to provide students with over time. For example, the level of assistance with course registration during the first-year is quite different than it would be for the junior year of college.

Pre-enrollment; Q024. M = 3.36, SD = 1.14
Pre-enrollment; Q023. M = 3.89, SD = .97
Q03. M = 2.57, SD = .77
Q04. M = 2.57, SD = .84
Q06. M = 2.87, SD = .84
Q15. M = 2.58, SD = 1.25

Evidence Library #67. Admissions Family Web Site; #89. Purdue Parents Facebook Page; #90. Purdue Family Web Site; #92. Admissions Parent Emails; #150. Prospective Student and Parent Website; #100. USP STAR Parent Orientation Presentation; #222. USP STAR Student Orientation Presentation; #229. Ag STAR Presentation; #270. FY Engineering STAR Presentation; #299. Vet Tech STAR Presentation; #300. Management STAR Presentation; #123. Ag Parent Web Site; #52. USP Newsletter — September 9, 2011; #104. Ag Parent Letter; #195. SATS Family Calendar; Residential Life Parent E-Newsletter http://www.housing.purdue.edu/HTML/Families/Default.htm (accessed July 11, 2012). Purdue University.

Q029. M = 2.98, SD = 1.14
Foundations of Excellence

Communication to Others

Admissions holds face-to-face fairs, conferences, and luncheons with school personnel within the state of Indiana and also in targeted regions across the United States. They have also begun to make international visits (e.g., China, Chile, India). At this point, most visits are done through central Admissions, but more collaborations with specific colleges are beginning to develop. Purdue does not spend a great deal of time and energy on marketing within the state of Indiana because the University does not experience difficulty in recruiting prospective in-state students. That said, Admissions conducts high school visits and sends admissions material to school counselors within the state. More specifically, representatives from Admissions visit every high school in the state of Indiana at least every other year and more than half of high schools receive visits every year.

More than 1,000 hard copy packets containing information about Purdue Admissions are sent to high school personnel (including all high schools within the state of Indiana) each summer. Admissions also sends out an email newsletter, the Advisor, to school personnel about preparing students for college (e.g., applicant information, admissions requirements, understanding programs of study). Admissions print material effectively communicates the lived experience of Purdue students through photos, stories, typical activities, etc.

Secondary school personnel are often most focused on whether or not their students meet Purdue’s academic requirements. It is important that a consistent message continue to be sent regarding the rigor of academic preparation required as opposed to a focus solely on GPA. Purdue uses a holistic admissions approach, and although GPA and class rank are important, it is necessary for school personnel to receive a consistent message about the need for high school students to prepare for college by taking advanced courses in their key areas of interest. It is also paramount for school personnel to discuss with their students issues of fit with the institution (e.g., large campus, rural area, need to be a self-advocate) and the importance of personal and life management skills as well as social integration. Purdue would need to generate print material that communicated information regarding these issues.

Out-of-state secondary school personnel who play a key role in advising prospective students are a challenging group to identify. Unless they make the initial contact with Admissions, it is virtually impossible to create and maintain a database of out-of-state personnel.

Purdue attracts students from all 50 states and nearly 130 countries. Promoting the student-lived experience through mass media (e.g., radio, TV, print advertisement) on such a large scale is not economically feasible. Instead, Purdue communicates the lived experience of first-year students through direct marketing and extensive recruitment, both domestic and abroad. Marketing to international students is primarily done through recruitment trips and online communications (e.g., website, email connected through Hobson) as opposed to mass media approaches.

Purdue has some “accidental” collaborations with other support networks that contribute to student success. SATs works together with Follett’s and University Spirit bookstores, CityBus, and other businesses such as Target, Wal-Mart, and Meijer to provide an interactive experience during Boiler Gold Rush. For example, students take an evening bus trip to local businesses, and in turn, the businesses provide a fun and helpful environment catered directly to students. There is opportunity for Purdue to be even more intentional and send more direct messages with those experiences. Purdue could partner with local businesses to showcase items focused on student organization, Purdue spirit, or have well-known University representatives welcome students to the community.

Communicating more directly with other support networks about the role they have to play in contributing to student success may encourage such entities to become more engaged with the campus. This process of enhanced engagement could contribute to improving students’ perceived lack of connection with the local community. More specifically, the Eduventures survey indicated that 10 to 16 percent of students who were at high risk to leave did not like living in the Greater Lafayette area. Anecdotally, students do not perceive the community to have ample opportunities for entertainment, dining, shopping, and a lack of community for underrepresented groups.

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Evidence Library #416: Admissions HS Counselor Presentation; #418: Admissions/SSS Youth Advisor Outreach, #11: Eduventures Survey 1, #12: Eduventures Survey 2, #93: Admissions HS Counselor Email. Purdue University.
Facilitating Student Connections

Connecting with Faculty
Many students express the desire to connect with faculty because many first-year courses are taught in large-lecture format and many recitations are taught by GTAs. The Student Survey respondents indicated a relatively low level of interaction with faculty, and the open-ended responses from the Faculty/Staff and Student Surveys indicated a need for smaller classes and more opportunities for students to interact with faculty.51

It is not clear how first-year students define the term “faculty.” Are they concerned about whether or not their instructors are tenure-track faculty members? Or are they more focused on instructors’ ability to teach and their displayed interest and motivation to contribute to student success?

The Faculty Fellows program is an opportunity for students to engage with faculty outside of the classroom; however, most of the staff involved in this program are not faculty members. Purdue Promise, Learning Communities, and EPICS are examples of programs on campus that provide opportunities for students to interact with faculty outside of the classroom.

Connecting with Upper-Class Students
First-year students have some contact with upper-class students through their involvement in student organizations and through programs such as Purdue Promise, EPICS, Women in Engineering Program (WIEP), and mentors in 100-level courses, but student responses indicated that students perceived a moderate level of assistance from Purdue in connecting with upper-class students.56 Purdue has not fully utilized the resource that it has in upper-class students as mentors for first-year students.56

52 Q027. M = 2.76, SD = 1.08
53 Evidence Library #254: EPICS. Purdue University.
54 Evidence Library #263: WIEP – Undergraduate Mentees & Mentors Program; #264: WIEP – Personal Connection Program. Purdue University.
55 Q027. M = 3.19, SD = 1.09

In contrast, first-year students often have courses with other new students and make connections with their first-year peers through BGR and Learning Communities. These opportunities for connection are reflected in a slightly higher rating from students regarding how well Purdue assists them in connecting with other new students.57

Connecting with Support Services
Each student at Purdue has an academic advisor and is required to meet with that advisor each semester in order to receive a code for registration. Advisors often serve as referral agents for students to connect with other Student Affairs professionals and academic support services. As other Dimension Committees have concluded, resources for first-year students are not centrally administered or coordinated. Student Survey data suggests that first-year students may be more knowledgeable about where and how to seek services for academic issues58 than they are for seeking services for non-academic matters.59 In addition, it is critical to note that of the students who reported not seeking services from any Purdue offices, 23.6 percent indicated wanting to handle the issue on their own.60 Students need information on the importance of self-advocacy and on the normalization of seeking support services while in college.

Purdue is currently in transition with regard to the definition and organization of Student Affairs. The committee could not agree on which job titles and roles across campus fit under the overarching descriptor of a Student Affairs professional.

Academic Advising
In its 2010 Advising Assessment Report, the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools reported that Purdue provided an overall high quality of academic advising.61 As described in the report, students were asked a number of questions regarding their perceptions of learning related to academic and career issues. Eighty-eight percent reported being capable of choosing courses that complemented their plan of study, and 67 percent attributed that capacity to academic advising. More than 81 percent of students reported having a better understanding about their future career goals and 64 percent attributed that improvement to academic advising.

The Faculty/Staff and Student Surveys reflect a mixed picture. More specifically, students who responded to the open-ended questions listed academic advising as a clear strength, but also a clear area for improvement. Likewise, faculty and staff respondents indicated advisors as a strength, but also noted the need for more advisors to allow for more personalized advising. Faculty and staff also indicated a low level of individualized attention focused on first-year students.62

57 Q025. M = 3.65, SD = 1.08
58 Q052. M = 3.70, SD = .99
59 Q053. M = 3.15, SD = 1.13
60 Q03
62 Ibid.
63 Q048. M = 2.60, SD = .98
The quantitative items in the table below suggest that faculty, staff, and students differ in their perceptions of academic advising. It is possible that faculty view the role of advisors to primarily involve the four items listed below and see students moving through their course progression as intended, while students see the role of advisor to be more than just the four listed below. Students can be very self-sufficient in selecting courses and often think they know what it takes to be successful without assistance from an advisor in these areas.

Table 5-2. Survey Results — Academic Advising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Staff/Faculty M</th>
<th>Students M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall effectiveness (staff/faculty) or satisfaction (students) of academic advising</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisors helping students select courses</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>3.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisors discussing what it takes to be academically successful</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisors discussing future enrollment plans</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although all Purdue students are required to meet with their academic advisor each semester, there is a great deal of variability in how academic advising is addressed across campus. The most consistency exists prior to the first-year as all domestic students are required to attend STAR and register for their courses at that time.

In the current STAR approach, students who attend at the start of each week have an advantage over those who attend at the end of the week. A specific number of sections of highly sought-after courses are released at the beginning of each new registration week. In addition, some colleges “front-load” their STAR process, taking most of the slots available in certain first-year student courses (e.g., Nursing). There are simply not enough sections of courses offered to satisfy the needs of each incoming first-year class.

SATs and ISS are working on a virtual STAR process so that international students can also register through a similar system. Currently, international students “meet” with their assigned advisor via email, phone, or video chat for their registration appointment and then register online from their homes.

The massive number of registrations that take place during STAR do not allow for much discussion with students regarding life and career goals. This issue has been particularly significant at Purdue because the institution does not currently have a core curriculum, making initial selection of a major critical to students’ efficient degree completion. The upcoming implementation of a core curriculum should help address this issue.

Some colleges use faculty advisors rather than professional staff advisors. There is a great deal of variability in how this process of faculty advising is approached (e.g., some faculty delegate the process to their assistants who are professional staff members), and issues of optimal advising load are also likely different between professional staff and faculty advisors.

The significant disparity regarding the current ratios of academic advisors to students across campus units is striking and difficult to reconcile. For example, academic advising loads currently range from 1-to-1 (for a faculty advisor) to 1-to-1,000 (for a professional staff advisor). An advising load of 1,000 does not allow for any exploration of rationale for courses or any conversations about life and career goals. Also, advisors do not currently have access to the Signals system.

In addition, Purdue does not currently have a mobile academic advising record. Students frequently change majors, and advisors must rely on websites, emails, and phone calls to supply the necessary information regarding a new major path and its requirements. Efforts are currently underway on campus to develop mission and vision statements for academic advising and clear roles and expectations for academic advisors.

The pay scale for academic advisors varies by college. Therefore, retention within each advising office is challenging as advisors often seek to move to colleges where they can earn more. This issue creates challenges for students receiving personalized advising based on personal and individualized attention.

Many questions remain. What would it take to standardize job descriptions and pay scales across all professional advising programs? Due to the decentralized nature of Purdue, academic advisor training is not standardized across campus. Can academic advising be viewed as a faculty member’s teaching rather than service load?

Source: Purdue Foundations of Excellence Task Force.
Recommendations

1. Establish a task force to oversee a transition to centralized coordination of all first-year seminar or orientation courses (including those that are currently only discipline-based and those with an orientation to campus or college emphasis).

   • Purdue depends on BGR to provide students with information regarding the transition to Purdue and to college. Massive amounts of information are offered during an intense and brief period, and students are not likely to retain critical information. Providing information in a course that spans the first semester offers information at more salient times when students are more likely to retain.

   • Content and structure of first-year seminar/orientation courses across campus varies greatly across campus. Some include content on orientation to Purdue and college in general, while others are focused solely on orientation to a college, department, or discipline.

   • Overlap exists in some orientation courses, and students involved in certain programs (e.g., USP, Purdue Promise, HORIZONS) may be required to take more than one orientation course. Central coordination would allow for oversight.

   • Survey data indicates the need for increased faculty contact and smaller courses during the first year.

   • The task force will review the content and structure of first-year seminar and orientation courses across campus, establish consistent learning objectives associated with “orientation to Purdue” and personal management skills (e.g., financial literacy, time management), while acknowledging the need for college-, department-, and career-related content. Solicit student feedback regarding the need and content of information related to orientation to Purdue and to college in general.

   • Consider making first-year seminar or orientation courses a part of the emerging core curriculum.

   • Gather data that could be used to increase student understanding of the need for such material.

   • Suggested transition-related course objectives:

     ▪ Enhancement of students’ self-advocacy around academic and non-academic challenges. Purdue is too large and first-year students are too new for a completely autonomous approach to be effective. Students need direct and concrete messages regarding how they must be responsible and seek assistance when they need it. Self-advocacy (with regard to seeking appropriate guidance and assistance) is a valuable life skill.

     ▪ Provision of information about Purdue:

       ▪ Academic Resources
       ▪ Non-academic resources
       ▪ Integrity-related issues
       ▪ Calculating GPAs
       ▪ How to track and check academic progress

   • Provision of information about college in general

     ▪ Impact of curricular and co-curricular activities on educational outcomes
     ▪ Advantages and disadvantages of working while in college
     ▪ Negotiating relationships with faculty and staff

   • Increase in life management skills, including:

     ▪ Time, financial, and stress management
     ▪ Personal relationships and intercultural awareness/competence
     ▪ Overall physical and mental well-being

   • Facilitation of student career development

     ▪ Exploring career goals
     ▪ Career selection as process of “fit”

   • Possible textbook includes *Your College Experience: Strategies for Success* by John N. Gardner and Betsy O. Barefoot.

2. Allocate more resources to the process of academic advising and encourage a more accurate campus-level understanding of the key role academic advisors have in enhancing student success.

   • Resources are needed to:

     ▪ Ensure more appropriate, reasonable, and consistent (across colleges) academic advising load. A target goal is 225 students per advisor. Students need advisors who have the time resources available to build relationships and provide individualized attention.

     ▪ Continue development of the roles, functions, and standards of undergraduate academic advisors at Purdue.

     ▪ Enhance training of academic advisors based on approved role, function, and standards.

     ▪ Provide University direction and support to help standardize advisor training across campus.

     ▪ Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of STAR

       ▪ If STAR current format is maintained:

         ▪ Randomly assign time tickets throughout the day to all STAR attendees so no program has an unfair advantage to getting access to classes.
         ▪ Roll spaces in classes out throughout the day so no student has an unfair advantage in getting space in a class by time of time ticket.

       ▪ If STAR is substantively revised and improved to emphasize the process of academic advising:

         ▪ All students meet 1-to-1 with an advisor to discuss skills, abilities, interests, etc., and to then select appropriate courses.
         ▪ Information obtained in advising meetings can be used to determine demand for specific courses.
> All incoming students will register once STAR ends as opposed to the day of their visit. Students would be randomly assigned a time ticket window as they are for all future registrations.

- More accurate understanding of the role of advising is needed to:
  - Ensure more referral to academic advisors as primary gatekeepers.
  - Enhance collaboration between academic advisors, faculty, and student affairs professionals.

3. Allocate enough resources to allow colleges and departments to offer a sufficient numbers of sections of key first-year courses (e.g., ENGL 10600, COM 11400, CHM 11500, BIOL 11000, BIOL 20300, PHYS 17200, PSY 12000, SOC 10000, ENGR 13100, MA 16100, and all basic first-year services courses) for the entire incoming class of students.

- The number of sections should be driven by the size of the incoming class. Students are not likely to have confidence in Purdue’s commitment to their success when they cannot get into the classes they need their first semester on campus.

4. Select first-year course instructors who are highly invested in student success, and provide enhanced training to first-year instructors. Designate a group of educators who are dedicated to providing instruction to create a foundation for success.

- Committee discussion focused on the idea that first-year students need to interact with instructors who are focused on student success and have the time and resources available to invest in building relationships with students. First-year students, in particular, are not likely to differentiate between tenure-track and clinical faculty or between faculty and professional staff or GTAs who are. First-year students are likely to recognize which instructors are invested in their learning and make attempts to build personal connections (e.g., learn names).

- It is important to state directly that, at Purdue, tenure-track faculty are hired to be researchers. To ask them to have dual priority to ensure first-year student success may put them in a position where their success as a faculty member is at risk.

- Faculty, staff, and GTAs who teach first-year students need more training (e.g., IMPACT) and recognition (e.g., promotion and tenure, merit pay, awards) for their contributions to student success.

- Programs such as the Faculty Fellows program need to be revisited, revived, and redesigned to create structured ways for students to interact with faculty outside of the classroom.

5. Streamline the information provided to prospective and first-year students.
- Revise the Purdue website to include sections specifically designed for prospective and first-year students and sections that communicate the lived experience of students. Provide concise and organized information relevant to each group. A Onebook approach (i.e., hard copy resource book including information about campus and necessary forms to be completed) could be used to streamline communication with all students who have been admitted and have deposited.

- Purdue website search capacity needs to be optimized (e.g., relegate news stories to a separate search function) for use by first-year students, staff, and faculty who are working to contribute to student success.

- Use of online communication technologies also needs to be centralized.

6. Increase communication with secondary school personnel about preparing students to be successful.
- Purdue needs to take the lead in offering school personnel more specific information regarding the academic and non-academic challenges students often face in their transition to college. School personnel, including school counselors, need to receive consistent and centralized information regarding the academic rigors and demands of Purdue including the idea that taking advanced courses in students’ areas of interest are likely more important than “protecting” their GPA. In addition, Purdue is a large campus located in a generally rural environment and the college transition often lacks structure, and requires students to be self-advocates and to take action to ensure their social integration.

7. Allocate resources to hire an Admissions staff member dedicated (100 percent) to campus tours, including the recruitment, training, and mentoring of student tour guides.
- This staff member will also serve as the central coordinator of all campus tours (central and college/unit level) with the goal of enhancing the consistency and accuracy of information offered during all campus tours.

8. Create radio, television, and print items that communicate the lived experience of Purdue students. Determine cost effective ways to disseminate such marketing material to domestic and international audiences.

9. Communicate directly with members of the community (e.g., churches, community organizations, and local businesses) about their contribution to student success. Convene a yearly meeting with community partners to discuss opportunities for enhanced involvement and collaboration.

10. Create a centralized office to coordinate efforts focused on the family’s role in student success.
DIMENSION SIX: All Students

Foundations Institutions serve all first-year students according to their varied needs. The process of anticipating, diagnosing, and addressing needs is ongoing and is subject to assessment and adjustment throughout the first year. Institutions provide services with respect for the students’ abilities, backgrounds, interests, and experiences. Institutions also ensure a campus environment that is inclusive and safe for all students.

As Purdue has worked to increase its academic profile and develop a global mindset on and off campus, the diversity of the student population has been the focus of increased attention. Across campus, the term “diversity” carries many meanings. For the purposes of the All Students Committee’s report, the term “diversity” refers to those dimensions of identity marking human difference, with special attention paid to those dimensions linked to disparate access to campus resources, varying perceptions of campus climate or significant differences in student success evidenced in retention, graduation and off campus, the diversity of the student population has been the focus of increased

Additionally, the Committee considered students whose gender is underrepresented in their academic program and those whose socio-economic status resulted in an increased burden in covering the costs of a Purdue education, especially those who are entirely or mostly reliant on financial aid to cover these costs. While the Committee recognizes the likelihood that many students fall into more than one of the categories listed above, students in that position were not considered as a separate subpopulation.

Finally, the Committee acknowledges that students who are not represented in any of the above categories do not receive special consideration here. This reflects a belief that evidence from our review did not suggest that these students, as a group, suffer decreased access to existing campus resources, negative perceptions of campus climate, or diminished likelihood for success at Purdue. Nevertheless, the Committee’s concluding recommendations are likely to also have positive impacts on access, perception, and success for those students.

A recurrent theme in the Committee’s discussion was a concern that “one size fits all” solutions are becoming increasingly valued by the University. While the Committee applauds efforts to increase access to resources and to ensure that all institution-wide programs meet a standard of inclusive excellence, concerns were frequently repeated that programs tailored to meet the needs of specific subpopulations are often necessary and cannot be replaced by even the most inclusive institution-wide programs. This perspective relies heavily on existing research on implicit bias, stereotype threat, and perceptions of campus climate.

Implicit bias, a subset of implicit social cognition, refers to the unconscious associations people make that may reflect stereotypes or other discriminatory beliefs. Significant research has established the prevalence of such associations in terms of gender and ethnic/racial categories.

Stereotype threat refers to feelings of anxiety in situations where one may confirm a stereotype. Some of this research has found that stereotype threat can have negative impacts on student performance.

Many researchers have examined various methods of measuring campus climate through surveying student perceptions. Recent efforts have concluded that such assessments have


Scholarship in these areas suggests that, despite our best intentions, efforts to be inclusive often result in “colorblind” programs that implicitly ignore the unique needs and perspectives of various subpopulations.

As a Committee, we had hoped that the Foundations of Excellence Student Survey would inform our conclusions and recommendations, but ultimately found limited use for the data. According to our analysis, among the roughly 2,000 respondents who completed the survey there were no individual subpopulations whose responses varied significantly from the overall responses for any of the 23 Likert-scale questions determined to be relevant to the All Students Dimension. For this reason, data from the survey has not been included in our discussion.

Our review offers three characteristics indicative of the first-year experience at Purdue.

1. The lack of a common academic experience
2. A culture of self-identification
3. The prevalence of threat and bias

Lack of Common Academic Experience

First-year students at Purdue do not share a common academic experience. While the Committee understands that the University’s size, disciplinary diversity, and governance structure are often selling points, and that Purdue’s commitment to being a land-grant institution often means admitting students with varying academic preparations, the committee identified concerns that the degree to which academic experiences vary might impact the institution’s ability to effectively evaluate the first-year experience. The following examples serve as evidence for this characteristic.

Purdue’s current admissions standards and practices evaluate and admit applicants based on their likelihood for success in given academic majors. In addition, Purdue students come from a wide variety of secondary schools and cultures from around the world. As such, students’ academic experiences vary before they are even accepted. Further, there is a perception among students, faculty, and staff that admissions standards are vastly different from program to program. The Enrollment Management Planning Group is responsible for reviewing projections and approving targets related to enrollment. Additionally, academic deans (among other college and school administrators) meet annually with the Dean of Admissions to establish recruitment and admission expectations for individual programs. Finally, these differences are echoed by the variety of advising practices in various colleges and schools. The Transitions and Learning Dimensions discuss this subject in further detail.

Although STAR attempts to provide the incoming class with common transition, advising, and registration experiences, several factors may mitigate the positive effects of those pre-matriculation activities. For STAR, the requirement that students attend on a weekday and the potential for travel and lodging costs are likely to make participation a greater burden for out-of-state students and/or students who are relying on financial aid to cover the costs of college. Currently, international students are not required to participate in STAR, since both costs and visa complications can be prohibitive. Among domestic students, more than 200 exemptions are granted each year to those for whom it would be a hardship to attend. Increasingly, incoming students may be able to complete some STAR-related activities online, though some requirements (such as obtaining a Purdue identification card) must wait until the student is on campus. Additionally, while students with disabilities are invited to participate in STAR, the inaccessibility of placement tests such as ALEKS (Math) makes equal participation unfeasible for students who utilize screen reading devices and software.

Similar financial and residency concerns may also affect participation in BGR. In addition to the $320 fee, participation in this program requires students to move to campus a full week prior to the start of classes, which may mean one less week to earn money prior to starting school. Moreover, even those students who are expecting financial aid are not likely to receive disbursements before registration fees are due, meaning that these costs must be paid out of pocket. Fee waivers are advertised through the website and brochure, but in alignment with the following discussion regarding self-identification, the burden rests on incoming students to apply. For these reasons, many domestic students may choose not to attend. Further, the Committee noted that international students generally participate in BGR at lower rates than their domestic peers. In 2011, approximately 36 percent of international students (13 percent of the total incoming class) attended BGR. Retention rates were higher for participating international students (92 percent versus 88 percent for non-participating international students).

Resources for academic support outside of the classroom fell into three categories that reflect implicit institution values.

1. Academic resources that are available to all students and not specific to a course. These resources seem to be the most limited in number. In fact, only two resources were identified in this category — the Academic Success Center and the Online Writing Lab.
2. Academic resources that are open to all students and tied to specific courses, most of which are 100- or 200-level service courses in the College of Science (also referred to as “fail-out” courses by students and as “gateway” courses by staff). These resources include Supplemental Instruction and a variety of departmental resource rooms. Though some of the departmental resources do offer free, one-on-one assistance, many of them are not open during the hours conducive to student needs. Supplemental Instruction, on the other hand, holds its sessions in the evenings, but does not offer one-on-one assistance.
3. Resources that are not open to all students and not specific to a course. Almost all of the resources in this category require ongoing participation in a support program (e.g., Purdue Promise, HORIZONS and most Multicultural/Minority Programs). Such resources include separate sections of major courses, free tutoring, and dedicated full-time staff.
While some programs provide exhaustive resources, networking opportunities, peer mentoring, tutoring, and the attention of multiple full-time staff, other programs (such as multicultural minority programs) are under-resourced. Resources, both financial and human, vary across the board. The inconsistencies in reporting lines, number of staff, and funding present challenges for the small programs that serve the non-majority student on a predominant campus. We feel that the existence of such programs allows students to identify with those who can assist them while providing a level of safety and inclusion that engenders confidence and growth. The procurement of funding for all student-focused programs on our campus varies widely due to state mandates, whether or not students pay a fee alongside tuition, the availability and securement of grants, or program-specific fundraising. For some departments, funding issues are less problematic than in others, especially those that rely on grants or fundraising for operational expenses.

**Culture of Self-Identification & Self-Advocacy**

There is a perception that Purdue has a persistent “culture of self-identification and self-advocacy” that places responsibility on students to identify and address their own academic, social, and personal needs. While this culture may not be inconsistent with existing privacy laws, University policies requiring self-disclosure and general efforts to avoid making assumptions, the Committee identified concerns that first-year students may not have the knowledge, confidence, or interest necessary to effectively pursue self-advocacy. For example, with the exception of students participating in academic support programs, honors programs, or intercollegiate athletics, most first-year students are not approached by faculty or staff members regarding their academic needs. Though new programs like Signals may change this, most students do not currently have access to timely assessments of their classroom performance in relation to the drop deadline for courses.

Despite efforts to provide an overview of campus during STAR and BGR, many first-year students remain unsure of the location of many important campus offices. Moreover, international students, first-generation students, and domestic students of color have anecdotesally reported a lack of confidence in approaching various campus resources as a result of less-than-positive experiences they or their friends have had in the past. Finally, student veterans (students who have served on active military duty) face many bureaucratic hurdles if they choose to take advantage of federal education subsidies made available to them, while students with disabilities experience varied, but equally bureaucratic processes in order to receive appropriate accommodations.

Even when presented with institutional efforts aimed at educating and empowering, some students remain hesitant to identify and address their own needs. For example, the Disability Resource Center provides students with information and assistance in obtaining a variety of accommodations, in compliance with federal guidelines and University Policy, requiring instructors to make those accommodations. Nevertheless, some students express difficulty in communicating requests for accommodations to instructors. Additionally, some students may choose not to visit instructors during their office hours because of previous experiences with instructors who were not helpful. As case studies, these examples offer insights into the hesitancy with which Generation Y/Millennial students approach self-advocacy.

Academic advisors and/or resident assistants may be best positioned to help students identify and address academic, social, and personal needs. However, not all first-year students live in residence halls (roughly 10 percent of first-year students for fall 2011 did not live in residence halls), and even some of those who do may not have an opportunity to build strong relationships with their resident assistants due to location and apartment style living arrangements (e.g., Purdue Village or Hilltop). Further, because advising loads vary across colleges and schools, many advisors do not have time to develop the kinds of relationships with their students that would allow them to assist in this way (refer to discussions in the Transitions Dimension). Finally, as a result of varying perceptions of campus climate, students in certain subpopulations may be less likely to discuss academic or social/personal needs with either resident assistants or academic advisors, as discussed in the following section.

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Prevalence of Threat & Bias

A review of various assessments indicated that perceptions of bias; discrimination; and physical, emotional and/or psychological threat are prevalent among several subpopulations at Purdue. The following examples serve as evidence for this characteristic.

Strikingly, African American or Black students are half as likely to graduate in four years as their Caucasian or White peers. Second-year retention and six-year graduation rates suggest that Purdue’s climate is not conducive to the ongoing academic and personal success of domestic students of color, including African American or Black students, Latino or Hispanic students, and Native American or American Indian students. At Purdue West Lafayette — as is the case at most institutions of higher education — the challenge is more pronounced among males, as shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recent diversity climate assessments concluded that approximately 40 percent of students reported experiences of being harassed or discriminated and approximately 50 percent of students reported witnessing discrimination or harassment on our campus. Additionally, students reported less comfort in interacting with someone of a different sexual orientation or someone with a disability.

Among various subpopulations, the Committee concluded the least resources (proportionate to populations) were being provided to commuter students, students who are not native speakers of English, LGBTQ students, students who are on active duty in the military, and male students who are underrepresented in their programs of study (e.g., Nursing, Veterinary Technology). For some subpopulations, a lack of any available resources may increase perceptions of threat or bias on campus.

Recommendations

Meaningful and lasting improvement related to issues of campus climate and the equitable access to resources among first-year students would require ongoing attention throughout the University structure. This includes a nuanced, student-centered approach to institutional review and the commitment of financial resources. The following recommendations are designed to offer a “broad strokes” view of a complex situation. As such, a preface to all recommendations is that further review is needed.

Simplistically stated, these recommendations are about providing the appropriate amount of options to our students. They point toward a Purdue that recognizes how unique our students can be, while remaining as efficient and fiscally responsible as we can be. It’s a vision of Purdue that avoids quick fixes, “one size fits all” approaches and surface-level commitments to diversity. Rather than attempt to be inclusive by requiring everyone to come together, the Committee feels that many members of various subpopulations on our campus find strength in numbers and achieve greater heights academically when supported by programs that resonate with their sense of cultural identity (e.g., Black Cultural Center, Women in Engineering Program, Native American Educational and Cultural Center, Latino Cultural Center). Rather than require students in all majors to take one diversity-related course, we suggest that multiculturalism be woven into the fabric of many courses and the diversity of faculty be considered paramount to developing a sense of inclusion among our first-year students.

If we are truly preparing all students for global leadership, we must begin by acknowledging the unique perspectives and experiences they bring to our campus.

1. Reconcile existing disparities among support programs.

   • Many, if not all, academic support programs report increased retention rates and student satisfaction, including both those programs designed to serve specific subpopulations within specific academic disciplines and those programs serving larger, more diverse populations across a variety of academic disciplines. However, many of these programs face institutional barriers to growth resulting from limited resources (funding and staffing). Rather than suggesting consolidation, the Committee recommends that smaller support programs should be grown within colleges and schools (with funding from their respective colleges and schools).

   • Additionally, the institution should encourage and incentivize collaboration among academic support programs like concentrating, streamlining, or standardizing resources. The Committee feels strongly that more specific support programs within colleges and schools allow services to be tailored to the needs of students, which can ultimately lead to increased student success. For example, rather than pulling academic resources geared toward first-year students into one central department, resources should be developed within colleges and schools and with academic programs in mind.
• The Committee also identified the importance of ongoing assessments to evaluate and improve existing support programs. In cases where limited staff or resources might prevent these programs from performing and reporting their own self-assessments, potential recommendations might be either to centrally locate an assessment position under the Office of Diversity and Inclusion or to request that assessment efforts within colleges and schools be broadened to include support programs serving specific subpopulations.

• We should also provide students with sufficient information and options regarding available support programs, ensuring that CODO students remain supported both financially and academically, and developing new (or expanding existing) peer mentoring programs, as well as programs to serve the unique needs of students with disabilities, LGBTQ students, and other subpopulations not currently served in this way.

2. Remove barriers to transition and orientation programs

• Increased access to fee-waivers and free housing, as well as strategic advertising of these options, would reduce the negative impact of economic constraints faced by families and students.

• We must also address scheduling conflicts between these programs and other summer programming for incoming students (e.g., STEM Academic Boot Camp, Band, and other program orientations), creating orientation program options that are tailored to the needs of individual sub-populations that could serve as an alternative to BGR. Develop methods for incoming students to access critical information after or in lieu of participating in these programs (e.g., an online repository of key presentations and handouts).

3. Develop core curricula that reflect and affirm student diversity

• As the University moves forward with the implementation of a core curriculum, a key consideration must be the extent to which common academic experiences reflect and affirm the growing diversity of the student body. Institutional efforts to educate about diversity take many forms, suggesting increasing buy-in among various departments and organizational units. Nevertheless, external studies on campus climate point to the critical importance of integrating diversity and inclusion into curricular settings, including, but not limited to, core curricula and seminar courses.

• We should increase professional development funding sources for faculty and staff to sharpen skill sets related to diversity education, create funding opportunities for student organizations to offer programming related to diversity and inclusion, and ramp up efforts to increase diversity among students, faculty, and staff.

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**DIMENSION SEVEN: Diversity**

**Foundations Institutions ensure that all first-year students experience diverse ideas, worldviews, and cultures as a means of enhancing their learning and preparing them to become members of pluralistic communities. Whatever their demographic composition, institutions structure experiences in which students interact in an open and civil community with people from backgrounds and cultures different from their own, reflect on ideas and values different from those they currently hold, and explore their own cultures and the cultures of others.**

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**Diversity at Purdue: A Brief History**

As a land-grant institution, Purdue is part of a distinguished tradition of democracy, inclusiveness, and accessibility in higher education. The 2008-2014 strategic plan states that all members of the University community are valued for who they are and what they contribute.

In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, Purdue prepares its students for living and working in a global society by immersing them in a diverse body of students, faculty, and staff on campus. The 2008-2014 strategic plan states that excellence cannot be achieved without an educational environment that is immersed in a diverse yet cohesive academic

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community where faculty, students, and professional staff engage in a rich mix of human and intellectual activities.”

The University seeks to develop and nurture diversity, which is defined as “equality and inclusion for all people — men and women of diverse races, ethnicities, religions, national origins, sexual orientation, abilities and skills, knowledge and ideas, socio-economic levels, life experiences, and perspectives that interact with the global community.”

The University communicates its vision for diversity through numerous policies and documents, including:

- 2008-2014 Strategic Plan: New Synergies
- Toward a Mosaic for Educational Equity: A Purdue Vision and Action Plan
- University Regulations 2009-2010, An Online Reference for Students, Staff, and Faculty
- Faculty and Staff Online Handbook
- Nondiscrimination Policy Statement
- Anti-harassment Policy

Through its “Statement of Principles and Values,” the University declares its commitment to maintaining an inclusive community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential.

All educational services and programs of the University are to be available and open to all academically qualified individuals without any discrimination on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, disability, or status as a veteran.

The 2008-2014 strategic plan called for the establishment of a Vice Provost for Diversity and Inclusion position. The position provides strategic leadership and vision around Purdue’s efforts to foster a climate that embraces and promotes diversity. Purdue’s first Vice Provost for Diversity and Inclusion was appointed in August 2009. The Office was charged with providing institutional leadership related to diversity and inclusion with four major areas of focus.

1. Increasing and retaining the number of underrepresented minority faculty
2. Increasing and retaining the number of underrepresented minority students
3. Preparing students with the requisite cultural competencies for global leaders
4. Developing a more inclusive campus community

A variety of projects and programs also contribute to the creation of a diverse and inclusive environment at Purdue. Purdue also provides social and academic opportunities for students from diverse cultures to acclimate to the University’s academic environment. For example, the colleges of Engineering, Science, and Technology have partnered to coordinate the Academic Boot Camp program, a summer session that exposes admitted students to the coursework, lifestyle, and pace of college life. The Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) program provides students with opportunities to work together with the University to promote the successful completion of a baccalaureate degree in a designated STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) discipline. The Summer Research Opportunities Program encourages talented undergraduate students from social and economic backgrounds that are underrepresented in research careers to pursue graduate education through intensive research experiences with faculty mentors. Purdue is also becoming increasingly involved in the education of Native American graduate students, actively recruiting more Native American students into graduate programs in the STEM disciplines.

The College of Agriculture serves as an example of how diversity is integrated into the curriculum through course requirements. Students can choose from a variety of courses in fulfilling the Multicultural Understanding Requirement, including the elective AGR 201 — Communicating across Cultures. The course includes a basic review of the variety of differences that exist among human beings, such as race/ethnicity, gender identity, age, social class, disability, learning styles, and religion/spiritual orientation.

123 Faculty and Staff Online Handbook. Purdue University. http://www.purdue.edu/faculty_staff_handbook/ (accessed July 16, 2012)
The Diversity Landscape Today

The concept of diversity has evolved into a complex set of meanings and definitions that vary from person to person. The Diversity Dimension Committee spent a significant amount of time discussing an overarching definition that would serve as a baseline for examination of the present state of diversity efforts at Purdue, and establishment of appropriate recommendations. The Committee agreed upon the following definition:

“Diversity refers to human qualities that are different from our own and those of groups to which we belong; but that are manifested in other individuals and groups. Dimensions of diversity include but are not limited to: age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, sexual orientation, educational background, geographic location, income, marital status, military experience, parental status, religious beliefs, work experience, and job classification.”

This concept focuses on a broader set of qualities than race and gender. In the context of the classroom, valuing diversity means creating an environment that respects and includes differences, recognizes the unique contributions that individuals with many types of differences can make, and creates an environment that maximizes the potential of all students. Accomplishing these goals requires a long-term commitment from executive leadership, faculty, staff and students, working together to establish and sustain an environment, which supports an all-inclusive, respecting community.

Demographics

According to data from Purdue’s Office of Institutional Research (OIR), the University has maintained a fairly consistent overall undergraduate student population of approximately 31,000 since the 2001-02 academic year. During the 2010-11 year, the total undergraduate student population of 30,836 was made up of the following:

- 42.4% Women
- 7.4% Underrepresented Minorities (All Undergraduates)
  - Compared to 5.4% in 2001-02
- 8.3% Underrepresented Minorities (U.S. Undergraduates)
  - Compared to 5.8% in 2001-02
- 11% International Undergraduates
  - Compared to 6.4% in 2001-02

This data demonstrates that Purdue is becoming more diverse in its international student population, but a slower rate of growth is seen amongst underrepresented minorities.

In 2011 nearly 8,000 students and 2,700 faculty and staff from more than 120 foreign countries were part of Purdue’s academic population.128 The University has the second-largest international student population among all public universities in the United States and is fourth overall.129

We also examined the demographic make up of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty. Of a total of 1,888 Tenured and Tenure-Track faculty in 2010-11:

- 445 were Minorities (23.6%) — includes international faculty
- 509 were Women (26.9%) — has shown steady increase since 2001-02
- 53 were Underrepresented Minorities (6.1%) — 7.8% in 2001-02 was the high over the 10-year period; however, the faculty size was smaller

The data suggests that the diversity of tenured faculty has not grown with respect to underrepresented minorities. The data also reveals that there are several colleges with no underrepresented minority tenured or tenure-track faculty. We believe that this non-growth has an impact, on some level, on opportunities for students to be exposed to diverse viewpoints.

After review of the CPI, Faculty and Staff Survey, Student Survey, and our own discussions, it appears that most units of the University are working to integrate diversity into their agenda. Many programs are aimed at supporting and addressing the needs of students who are underrepresented in certain fields such as women or minorities in STEM. These programs (listed below) should be acknowledged for their efforts to provide a much-needed layer of support to students. However, the existence of these programs alone does not ensure that first-year students experience a collegial community that exposes them to diverse ideas and worldviews.

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

- Ag Education Learning Community
- First-Year Seminar Courses
- Dean’s Scholars Learning Community
- Dean’s Scholars Program
- STAR Presentation FEELS Program
- Twenty-First Century/Purdue Promise Program
- USDA Multicultural Scholars Program
- SROP (Summer Research Opportunities Program)
- MANRRS (Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences)
- National Society HASA (Hoosier Agribusiness Science Academy) Summer Institute

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
• College of Ed — Block I EDCI 28500 Course
• College of Ed — Ed-Math Review Sessions and Individual Tutoring
• Ed Students in Ed Enhancing Diversity — SEED
• Ed-Teacher Ed. Ed Organizations Board — EOB
• Destined to Teach

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING
• EPICS Learning Community
• Honors Learning Community
• IDEAS Learning Community
• Network Learning Engineering — College Strategic Plan
• AFL Volunteer Worker Trainee Program
• Chinese Social Networking
• Cross-Cultural Communication and Diversity
• Global Engineering Cultures and Practices
• MEP Academic Boot Camp
• New Student Orientation Fall
• New Student Orientation Spring
• Women in Engineering Program (WIEP) Residential Community
  Engineering — WIEP Undergraduate Mentoring Program
• ENGR18000 — Minorities in Engineering Seminar — 1 Credit Hour
• ENGR 19400 — Women in Engineering Program Women In Engineering
  Seminar — 1 Credit Hour
• 2nd-Year Foundations Committee

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING AND COLLEGE OF SCIENCE
• Engineering and Science Learning Community — Integrated Science and
  Engineering
• Women in Science (WISP) and WIEP Tutoring

COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SCIENCES
• STAR Presentation

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND LIBERAL ARTS
DIVERSITY INITIATIVES
• Twenty-First Century Scholars’ CLA Mentor
• Learning Communities
• Foreign Language Placement Exams

COLLEGE OF PHARMACY
• Multicultural Programs (MCP) Student-Parent STAR Experience

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE
• First-Year Seminar Courses
• Learning Beyond the Classroom Certificate Program
• Multicultural Orientation Experience (MOE)
• WISP
• SCI 100 Multicultural Leadership Training Seminar
• SOAR (Science Opportunities to Advance Retention) Study Tables

COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY
• TECH 100 — College of Technology
• TECH 101 — College of Technology
• Women in Technology (WIT) Learning Community
• STAR luncheon for Female Students
• STAR luncheon for Multicultural Students

SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT
• The Dr. Cornell A. Bell Business Opportunity Program (BOP)
• ECET
• Tech-Free evening tutoring for two required courses
• Undergraduate Studies Program
• GS 11900 — Introduction to Academic Programs at Purdue
• Twenty-First Century Scholars Mentor Program
• USP Explorers/Honors Learning Communities
• Fraternity and Sorority Life
• Meet the Greeks
• Office of International Students and Scholars
• Primary support resource for international students and scholars
• WOW (Weeks of Welcome) Educational Exchange Program
• International Friendship Program (IFP)
• Office of the Dean of Students
• HORIZONS Student Support Program
• Purdue Memorial Union
• Purdue Student Union Board
• Residence Life
• University Residences Global Residence Life Programming Efforts
The BLACK CULTURAL CENTER (BCC) provides purposeful, holistic, scholarly and co-curricular programming designed to enhance the understanding of the African American heritage. It enhances the academic, cultural, and social development of the entire Purdue community. The center was established in 1969 as a place where the African American Experience in America could be explored, celebrated and shared. It stands today as a visible representation of the University’s commitment to cultural diversity. The nationally recognized center houses a library, computer lab, an art collection and the BCC ensembles. The performing ensembles include the Black Thought Collective, Black Voices of Inspiration, the Haraka Writers, Jahari Dance Troupe, and the New Directional Players. The BCC sponsors a Cultural Arts Series featuring prominent scholars and performing artists. Educational tours of the facility are also available for students and community members.

The DIVERSITY RESOURCE OFFICE (DRO) encourages, develops, administers, and assesses programs and activities that foster a climate celebrating the rich diversity of our University community. DRO, home of the Diversity Key Certificate Program and the L.E.A.D. Peer Mentor Program, offers training for diversity competencies in both the workplace and learning environments. Other diversity initiatives include Diversity in the Global Experience, the Intersections Student Diversity Conference, the annual Diversity Summit, and publication of the Religious, Ethnic, and Civic Observances Calendar.

The LATINO CULTURAL CENTER (LCC) exists to provide the community awareness of the regional diversity of peoples, landscape, and cultures within the Latino Community. The LCC also strives to build a community for Latino/a Boilermakers and alumni to share their ideas and experiences to promote cultural awareness to the Purdue University campus and beyond. The center was established by students in 2003 as a place for them to learn, share, and support Latino/a Culture. LCC seeks to promote diversity and awareness through education and programming within its 15 Latino-based organizations; through its volunteer program, Embajadores; and within its facility. The Latino-based organizations serve as a support network for students while at Purdue and beyond. Embajadores, the LCC service-learning organization, incorporates leadership through its five committees: Recreation and Health; Community Outreach; Culture and Arts; Social Justice; and El Pulso, the student-led newsletter.

The LGBTQ ADVISORY BOARD is a committee of faculty, staff, student leaders, and community members that advises the Vice Provost for Diversity and Inclusion. The advisory board primarily focuses on issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity with respect to campus climate and inclusion. The group held its inaugural meeting in December 2007.

The National Science Foundation’s LOUIS STOKES ALLIANCE FOR MINORITY PARTICIPATION (LSAMP) Indiana project is a collaboration among eight universities in the state of Indiana. The goal of the project is to increase the quality and quantity of students successfully completing STEM baccalaureate degree programs. LSAMP has a long-term goal of increasing the number of students interested in, academically qualified for, and matriculated into programs of graduate study in the STEM disciplines.

The NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL CENTER (NAECC) represents the culmination of student, faculty, and administrative staff commitment to fostering a culturally diverse and intellectually inclusive campus environment. As the physical realization of the Tecumseh Project’s specific Native American student recruitment and retention objectives, NAECC seeks to provide Native American students personal and professional enrichment opportunities in a culturally-appropriate fashion and to serve as a “second home” for current and prospective Native American students. Moreover, the NAECC’s intended inclusion of Native American tribal communities and non-Native Purdue students, faculty, and staff into campus educational, cultural, and research programs fosters an environment of mutual accountability and respect that is vital to crafting cross-cultural relationships and enhancing campus diversity.

The mission of the WOMEN’s RESOURCE OFFICE (WRO) is to help lead Purdue to achieve equity, create a supportive campus climate, and provide a rich variety of opportunities for learning, professional growth, and leadership for all women students, staff, and faculty at the University. Working in partnership with the Susan Bulkeley Butler Center for Leadership Excellence, the WRO focuses on promoting inclusive leadership through research, education, and collaborations that help advance inclusion and broaden representation in the academic setting.

Additionally, University Residences houses more than 90 percent of all incoming students; however, there are no specific requirements for hall diversity programming. It should be noted that University Residences does have initiatives in place that address diversity issues amongst students and residential life staff as a whole, such as the following:

- UR GLOBAL is a student organization that matches first-year international students with volunteer student hosts during the first eight weeks of the fall semester to ease the transition to the Purdue community and college life. The program is a collaborative effort between University Residences, ISS, and the International Center.

- SOCIAL JUSTICE AND INCLUSION TEAM (STAFF TRAINING) was initiated during fall 2011. The working definition of Social Justice for Residential Life is “a personal and professional commitment to the intentional and interactive process of understanding privilege, disadvantage and oppression while working toward a more equitable institution.”
  - Facilitated a REC Training Session: “Social Justice and Inclusion”
  - Collaborated with the University Residential Life Training and Development Committee to ensure that Social Justice themes are threaded through all of RA Training
  - Facilitated an RA Training Session: “Creating Positive Spaces”
  - Facilitated a Tunnel of Oppression for the Fall RA Training
First, and most concerning, is that the work being done in the academic colleges appears to reach only small portions of the first-year student population with few centralized efforts from the University to prioritize exposure to issues of diversity. Responses to the 2008 Graduating Student Learning Outcomes Survey (GSLOS)\(^\text{120}\) show that more than 80 percent of the respondents agreed that interaction with individuals from diverse background and characteristics is an important part of a college education. But the survey also showed that 58 percent of students participated in an enriching diversity experience during their time at the University. Taken together, these results show that there is no guarantee that students will encounter programming related to diversity during their first year.

Another concern is that there seems to be a lack of centralized programming support efforts for all aspects of diversity (e.g., LGBTQ, disability, social class, religion, political views, etc.) This lack of attention can be seen in the responses to questions 39 to 41 of the Student Survey where only one-third of students reported feeling that the University did a good job of exposing students to different issues related to political perspectives, world religions, and social class.\(^\text{131}\) These efforts could most naturally conducted in collaboration with the central Office for Diversity and Inclusion.

New practices should be consistent across schools. The practices should be based on a commitment to diversity from University administration and an overall commitment from the University community. The University needs to take advantage of the diversity that already exists. New practices must include awareness and understanding through experience.

Diversity Curriculum

The variety and diversity of curriculum opportunities listed above are impressive. The list of courses and programs suggests that each college has addressed the diversity curriculum issues in a manner that meets their specific college’s needs.

One concern is that some students may be required to cover the same material across many courses. It also may be difficult to access the content of the various classes. For example, Nursing students may have different diversity training than Elementary Education students. The Committee believes that assessing existing protocol is necessary. We must ask, “How is diversity being taught? What new practices should be in place in the future?” Inherent issues include variations in definitions, learning objectives, assessment, and goals.

Diversity Communication

What new practices should be in place in future? Many of the offered programs are voluntary in nature. If appropriate incentives could be put in place, existing programs could be much more effective. The WOW program for international students has a boiler block optional program that was minimally attended in fall 2011. Since the program is delivered by recorded presentations, each international student could be required to view this program online, even before entering the country. If signing up for the check-in and enrollment required them to view this program first, the participation could reach 100 percent of the international students, rather than 25 percent.

Some of the special programs may need additional resources in order to include greater numbers of special student populations. For example, the Host Family program offered to international students may need to add more staff or incentivize more local families to grow the program.

Recommendations

1. Maximize the role and authority of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.
   - The staffing of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion must have a more centralized diversity investment. While there are reporting units, the central office staff is currently only made up of the Chief Diversity Officer and an administrative assistant.
   - New programmatic efforts should be informed and improved by ongoing assessment. Generally the most commonly identified institutional metrics for diversity are generally limited to issues related to representation. However, we recommend the addition of other metrics and accompanying accountability measures to effectively measure the impact of diversity and inclusion on the college campus.

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\(^{131}\) Evidence Library #542: Student Survey 11 Outcomes. Purdue University
2. Increase the extent of diversity efforts in the residence halls. One of the
greatest levels of opportunity to impact the first-year student outside of the
classroom is within the residence halls. University Residences consistently
houses more than 90 percent of the incoming first-year students.
   • Collaborative efforts as they relate to the ever-increasing international student
     population and other underrepresented groups should be engaged in by
     University departments such as Residences, SATS and Student Affairs, and ISS.

3. Develop curricula that reflect diversity.

4. Increase integration efforts for international students in residence halls and
   increase additional support for international student integration.
   • Create a new position of International Student Coordinator (possibly a graduate
     student). This role would be focused on programming specifically designed to
     engage more interaction between domestic and international students in the
     residence halls. Programs overseen could be mentoring programs, activities
     designed to be highly interactive, regular programs to structure/encourage
     interaction.
   • Develop language tables for the dining halls for students interested in learning
     other languages.
   • Increase the level of cultural training for all resident assistants.
   • Further support and enlarge the “UR Global” program. During the past two years,
     this program has proven effective to engage about 300 students in a mentoring
     program. An infusion of added staff and funding could enlarge this program to
     reach more students.
   • Establish a pre-departure orientation program for new international students
     coming to Purdue in fall 2012. This program would be piloted in China in summer
     2012. The focus of this program would be twofold:
     ▶ Acquaint key advisors, counselors, and support staff that work with
       our international student population in order to give them a better
       understanding of the background of international students.
     ▶ Provide information and Q&A sessions for prospective students and parents
       to assist them better understand what to expect when coming to Purdue in the
       fall.

5. Ensure that there is a diversity component in all incoming student summer
   programs (e.g., BGR, STAR, BGR-I, ISS programs).

6. Establish an LGBTQ Support Center. Support centers exist for most
   underrepresented groups, except for this one.

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**DIMENSION EIGHT: Roles & Purposes**

Foundations Institutions promote student understanding of
the various roles and purposes of higher education, both for the
individual and society. These roles and purposes include knowledge
acquisition for personal growth, learning to prepare for future
employment, learning to become engaged citizens, and learning to
serve the public good. Institutions encourage first-year students
to examine systematically their motivation and goals with regard
to higher education in general and to their own college/university.
Students are exposed to the value of general education as well as
to the value of more focused, in-depth study of a field or fields of
knowledge (i.e., the major). 132

As discussed earlier, Purdue seeks to “promote excellence in learning experiences
and outcomes, fostering intellectual, professional, and personal development to
prepare learners for life and careers in a dynamic, global society.” The strategic plan is
comprehensive in its reach, and numerous initiatives related to the plan are underway or
in discussion. The success of the plan in large part is dependent upon a strong first-year
experience.

Among the strategic plan’s specific goals are:

1. Reinvigorate the recruitment and retention of a diverse pool of students with
   enhanced academic preparation, and attend to their achieving success through
effective pedagogy, incentives and support, and outstanding opportunities for
career development.

2. Instill in students a passion for academic success as well as lifelong learning through currency in knowledge, pedagogical variety including distance learning programs/options, and conduct learning outcomes assessment for continuous improvement.

3. Consider developing a University college to provide common first-year program options for students to make well-informed choices of curricula before admission to a college/school degree program.

4. Undertake the initiatives toward a University-wide core curricular experience for integration into all degree programs in response to the need for core competencies the graduates must demonstrate, reflecting the value of curricular synergies that render them as informed graduates in a global society.

5. Engage all undergraduate students in experiential learning, early in their careers at Purdue, through involvement in research, service learning, study-abroad programs, and other hands-on experiences appropriate to their curricula.

6. Provide exceptional students with enhanced educational opportunities through an expanded University honors program and accelerated learning options.

7. Proactively attend to student success through early monitoring and positive intervention for students with declining academic success.

8. Significantly transform introductory (gateway) courses and develop effective pedagogies that are appropriate for various learning objectives so as to improve student success.

9. Create a centralized framework for student excellence and leadership to provide comprehensive one-stop support functions that enhance the effectiveness and responsiveness of core student support services, and coordinate activities and experiences that enhance student academic performance, extra/co-curricular activities, and professional development.

10. Expand and integrate civic engagement for students through campus design projects and community service opportunities to prepare for successful citizenship.

11. Promote respect and an inclusive community exemplifying diversity in all aspects of a productive, proactive, and nurturing learning environment.

In short, the strategic plan sets high educational expectations for students, faculty, and staff. The current situation is that many of the elements of the strategic plan related to “Launching Tomorrow’s Leaders” are underway, including SATS, IMPACT, STAR, expanded Learning Communities; and the rebirth of Supplemental Instruction. In addition, deliberation about the creation of a University core curriculum and a new Honors College are well underway.

As noted by the Transitions Dimension Committee, prospective and admitted students are bombarded with mail and electronic communications from admissions, housing, financial aid, and their future college and department. Many of the messages include language that stresses the importance of a college education that builds towards meaningful careers. Upon arriving on campus, additional messages are geared for the first-year students, clearly demonstrated by the depth of the Evidence Library.

For example, the 12th grade admissions brochure includes articles highlighting a Purdue education that can be creative and analytical, lead to a better world, etc.133 The word “job” is only found four times in the 30-page document, while the word “career” is found a dozen times. The references to “job” do not focus on finding a job, but rather:

- Encourage the student to seek a “dream job.”
- Note that Purdue graduates are known for their ability to hit the ground running from the day they graduate. We prepare students of all types of not just jobs, but careers spent creating a better world.
- Each year, Purdue graduates report a success rate that approaches or exceeds 90 percent in finding jobs, grad school placement, and reaching goals such as Teach for America and the Peace Corps.
- 8,419 is the number of on-campus student job interviews. (The national average is 3,555.)

Despite these efforts, our first-year students (and most likely their parents and family) are focused on the “job,” a concern that may reflect the economic times. However, a survey conducted by Eduventures on behalf of Purdue suggests that students and parents view the first job equivalent to a career. The Wordle compares the Faculty and Staff Survey responses of first-year students and faculty and staff to the open-ended question: “What is the purpose of higher education?” Among first-year students, there is a strong focus on securing a job or being in position to earn a higher salary. In contrast, faculty and staff are more focused on providing an education that prepares students for a meaningful career as productive and engaged citizens as opposed to a job.134 Faculty and staff also place a greater emphasis on building a global perspective. The students place emphasis on thinking of the future or bettering themselves. The differences are subtle, but important.

Our review leads us to three questions:

1. How well does Purdue communicate to first-year students the institution’s notion of purpose?
2. To what degree does Purdue provide students the opportunity to explore their motivation for higher education?
3. How well does Purdue communicate the institution’s rationale for its curriculum?

133 Evidence Library: #54: 12th Grade Admissions Brochure. Purdue University.
134 Evidence Library #594: Final Wordle. Purdue University.
Insights to these questions can be gleaned via a comparison of the Faculty and Staff Survey for five questions related to Roles & Purposes in the table below. They are:

1. Prepare for Employment
2. Knowledge for Personal Growth
3. Active Member of Your Community
4. Contribute to the Betterment of Society
5. Achieve Life Goals

Table 8-1.
A comparison of survey questions, by students versus staff and faculty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. PREPARE FOR EMPLOYMENT t-difference: 1.611</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student (Q83): Increases knowledge for your future employment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/Staff (Q44): Preparation for future employment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student</td>
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<td>Faculty/Staff</td>
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<tr>
<th>2. KNOWLEDGE FOR PERSONAL GROWTH t-difference: 12.656</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student (Q84): Increases knowledge for your personal growth?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/Staff (Q43): Knowledge for personal growth?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student</td>
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<td>Faculty/Staff</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. ACTIVE MEMBER OF YOUR COMMUNITY t-difference: 10.969</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student (Q85): Prepares you to be an involved member of your community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/Staff (Q45): Active engagement in the community?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group</td>
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<td>Student</td>
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<td>Faculty/Staff</td>
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<tr>
<th>4. CONTRIBUTE TO THE BETTERMENT OF SOCIETY t-difference: 11.012</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student (Q86): Prepares you to contribute to the betterment of society?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/Staff (Q46): Contributions to the betterment of society?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty/Staff</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. ACHIEVE LIFE GOALS t-difference: 6.324</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student (Q34): Discussed how college can help you achieve your life goals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/Staff (Q47): Achievement of their life goals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty/Staff</td>
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**Note:** Source: Purdue Foundations of Excellence Task Force.
Recommendations

1. Challenge first-year students to consider their role and purpose in their first month at Purdue. First-year students must be challenged to think about the roles and purposes of their education at a very early stage. Ideally, students would have this discussion with an advisor, with additional support from faculty, peers, etc. The conversation must focus on questions such as “What do you hope to accomplish in life?” or “How do you plan to make the world a better place?” Understanding what courses to take for a curriculum plan is important. However, if the first-year student does not have a concept of direction or “fit,” the academic aspect of advising may well be meaningless. Potential action steps include:
   - Some universities engage first-year students in a day of service at the beginning of the semester. It might be possible to implement this as part of BGR. BGR leaders could facilitate reflection sessions that would encourage students to consider “How do you plan to make the world a better place?”
   - Consider requiring a first-year orientation course for all first-year students. Care should be taken to avoid redundancy with existing orientation courses that require enrollment for the same students. An effort to capture best practices among existing campus orientation courses or programs such as Purdue Promise, the USP orientation course (GS 119), the Agricultural Economics peer mentoring orientation model (AGR 112 and AGEC 260) is recommended. The approach in such orientation courses should be around exercises and activities that encourage significant reflection time as opposed to an “information by saturation” approach. Guidance also should be sought from the University Senate committee working on the adoption of a core curriculum for the West Lafayette campus.
   - Topics for an orientation course might include:
     - Who am I? (skills, interests, talents, personality, learning preferences)
     - Who are we? (shared values, intergroup dialogue)
     - What are the expectations? (academic, self, etc.)
     - What do I do well? What do I enjoy? (career clarification and/or exploration)
   - Develop a fall semester lecture series around community service and connect it to highly saturated first-year courses (e.g., ENGL 106 or COM 114) or Learning Communities.
   - Utilize a social networking-based communication channel (e.g., Facebook) or some form of blogging activity to invite first-year student participation in thematic discussions relating to higher education roles and purposes. Over time, upper-class students could be selected and coached to help stimulate these online discussions and provide peer mentorship.
   - All residence halls already have a well-established faculty fellow program. A structured program hosted by faculty fellows could be established to facilitate discussions within the residence hall environment to consider the purpose of becoming a college-educated person.
   - Given the complexity of Purdue’s campus, our Committee agrees with the Transitions Dimension Committee that a task force be established to help implement a first-year orientation course.

2. Focus student education on innovation, entrepreneurship, and leadership. As a university, Purdue has relative strengths in these domains, and should present them to students as means to differentiate themselves from students at other universities, and as one means to achieve the strategic goal of Launching Tomorrow’s Leaders.
   - It is possible that a fair number of first-year students are unaware of campus resources and programs surrounding leadership, entrepreneurship, and innovation. One approach could be a marketing campaign aimed at connecting leadership programming to the residence halls or Learning Communities.
   - Create a set of new leadership workshops/courses specifically designed for first-year students. These offerings might build on current programs such as the President’s Leadership Class or the Emily Mauzy Vogel Sophomore Leadership Development Conference.
   - Alternatively, the materials on innovation, entrepreneurship, and leadership could be embedded in the orientation courses discussed in Recommendation 1 or become part of a series of first-year seminar courses.
   - Introduce first-year students to online professional networking such as LinkedIn, as opposed to social networking (e.g., Facebook). More than 800 Purdue students already belong to a LinkedIn community for entrepreneurship and innovation. This site also links Purdue students to alumni, faculty members, residence hall professionals, academic advisors, and Dean of Students’ counselors, among others.
   - The new Center for Student Excellence and Leadership (CSEL) initiative presents a great opportunity to inform students of programming designed to help them become innovators, entrepreneurs, and leaders. Although CSEL will not be a truly centralized location for student organizations and academic support operations, it will be strategically located in the Student Success Corridor and will bring many organizations and services under one roof.
3. Provide career planning information and career counseling for first-year students. Given students’ predisposition to finding a job, we cannot ignore the importance of career counseling, especially for first-year students. The Center for Career Opportunities (CCO) provides professional career counseling services but lacks the capacity to effectively address the needs of all first-year students:

- In a 2010 survey of 32 peer university career centers, the median career center staff/student ratio was one staff member for every 1,331 students and the mean ratio was one for every 1,337 students. The Purdue CCO finished last among peer career centers in the survey with a career center staff/student ratio of one for every 2,483 students. Given the breadth of the CCO’s delivery of career services, the demand for career counseling services cannot currently be met with available resources. With CCO’s services extended to students at all undergraduate class levels, as well as graduate students and alumni, there are limited opportunities for the CCO to adequately serve a high volume of first-year students. From August 1, 2011, to December 1, 2011, a total of 991 first-year students registered with their service (through CCO Express). Of that group, 296 first-year students have taken advantage of the CCO’s walk-in advising services while 99 first-year students engaged in pre-scheduled individual appointments. These numbers represent a small percentage of the first-year students enrolled on the West Lafayette campus.

- While the current model of advisors referring students to CCO for career counseling is understandable since most advisors’ backgrounds lack formal education or intensive training relating to career counseling theory and practice, opportunities to improve academic advisors understanding of career counseling must be further explored. As technology evolves (i.e., DegreeWorks is successfully implemented), the role of the academic advisor may change from a role of helping students select courses to the opportunity to engage students in a more meaningful way about their career development.

- We should not presume that advisors will have more time for career advising as DegreeWorks is implemented, at least not for the first few years. New IT solutions are often accompanied with unanticipated consequences. However, if DegreeWorks should be found to relieve advisors from some of their current course advising/auditing responsibilities, it would be wise to provide advisors with training related to career counseling. We offer the following recommendations for consideration:

  - Provide resources to the CCO to expand its career counseling staffing to a level more appropriate to the size and scope of the West Lafayette campus, allowing for a greater focus on direct student service. Specifically, four more career counselors could effectively meet the additional workload of providing comprehensive career counseling and career programming targeted at first-year students. Two of these counselors could be based within the residence halls, though administratively report to the CCO (as nine-month academic year appointments). The other two positions would be full-time counselors in the CCO facility.

  - If the CCO is more appropriately staffed with professional career consultants in accordance with professional norms, then charge CCO to take a leadership role in establishing a campus-wide institute to provide academic advisors with professional instruction and training in career counseling intervention and practice.

  - Establish a career counseling-based curriculum within the College of Education and incentivize academic advisors to pursue graduate level study in this discipline.

  - Alternatively, if a graduate degree program is not deemed viable, identify resources to help advisors develop personal and career counseling skills. Such a program could offer some type of certification (e.g., 15 credit hours) or could be professional development series that encompasses that focus over a year’s time (perhaps via a distance education-related model).

  - As vacancies occur with academic advising, charge selection committees to seek candidates with professional education and training in career counseling.

  - Place a greater emphasis on resident assistant training/programming. Career exploration could be a strong programmatic emphasis for first-year students during the spring semester, especially given the upcoming summer job market and delving deeper into their major during the sophomore year. Again, models of courses already exist that help students explore careers within a discipline. A best-in-class approach might be used to expand these opportunities to other majors.

4. Provide a consistent message about the role and purpose of a Purdue education. The decentralized nature of the campus’ organizational structure means that a variety of messages can be and are delivered to students. That said, it is critical during the first year that we are more deliberate and consistent telling our students that our programs of study and student life are designed to build a person for meaningful careers and engaged citizens.

- To become more deliberate and consistent in our messaging, one idea would be to create specific professional groups on campus who are traditionally engaged with first-year students. These groups of professionals could meet on a regular basis to ensure that each individual is sending the same message. This is especially true for academic advisors, residence life staff, predominant first-year course instructors, etc. Each semester could have themes, which connect the first year together more cohesively (e.g., Engaged citizenship, Impactful Work, Collaborative Communities, Learning Communities, etc.).

- It will also be critical to start the messaging on the Admissions website (e.g., the Admissions website includes a Success Guide for incoming students). The current guide fails to address roles and purposes of an education.
Assessment at Purdue: A Brief History

In pursuit of its educational mission to facilitate effective learning and teaching, Purdue has established activities assessing student learning, resources, and strategies devoted to its implementation, documentation of effort, and future directions.

The goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible. Learning expectations at Purdue are defined by eight university core competencies for undergraduate students and four core competencies for all Ph.D. students. In many cases, competencies established for Ph.D. programs have also been adopted by master’s programs. Moreover, the vast majority of undergraduate and graduate programs report learning outcomes at the program level.

Purdue’s Assessment Framework

Purdue’s basic framework for assessment is constructed upon four key components — Define, Facilitate, Assess, and Improve. These key components guide faculty in completing the assessment loop by asking what they want their students to learn (Define); how they will help their students to learn (Facilitate); how they will know if and why their students have, or have not learned (Assess); and how they will use assessment information to improve their students’ learning (Improve).

The assessment framework has been enhanced by creating the Boilermaker Accreditation and Learning Outcomes Tracking Site (BALOTS), which serves as the central repository for assessment reports. BALOTS is an important tool for documenting assessment efforts in a systematic, structured, and unified manner.

Assessment Leadership

One of the challenges presented by the University’s decentralized structure is coordination and direction of assessment efforts at the campus level. Purdue reinforced the importance of centrally coordinated assessment by forming the Student Learning Outcome Assessment Workgroup (SLOAW) group, with representation from all colleges/schools (undergraduate and graduate programs) and other relevant campus units (Academic Advising, the Graduate School, Information Technology, and the Office of International Programs). The University also created a campus-wide Director of Assessment position, whose responsibilities include leading the SLOAW group and leading learning outcomes assessment, a task previously delegated to administrators with many other responsibilities.

Assessment leadership is also provided at the college level and in other units on campus. Several of the colleges/schools have created assessment positions. Each academic program on campus has at least one person responsible for documenting the program’s learning outcomes assessment on the BALOTS website.

The assessment of student learning occurs both at the institutional and program levels. The responsibility for establishing and assessing learning outcomes within and beyond the parameters of the core competencies rests with the faculty. In keeping with Purdue’s decentralized structure, the faculty of each school define and implement their own assessment programs, but do so with an institutional model and a set of common principles set forth in the general University plan. Assessment methods at the institutional level include surveys such as the Cooperative Institutional Research Program, GSLOS, and the National Survey of Student Engagement. Course Signals, described earlier, is an innovative assessment program.


128 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
A review process is crucial for ensuring that student learning is monitored on an ongoing basis and that assessment evidence is used for continuous improvement of student learning. Most academic programs have some or all of the following elements in their review process to ensure that the assessment loop is closed. Assessment evidence is analyzed and translated into findings, and desired changes are implemented to improve student learning. New evidence is then gathered to assess changes and to continuously monitor learning. Responsibilities for the review process are shared by key stakeholders and effective mechanisms are in place for implementing the process.

Resources

Best practices regarding assessment are communicated and shared in a variety of ways. This includes assessment-related workshops offered by the CIE, training sessions for BALOTS users, workshops and consultations available to academic units and faculty upon request, and online resources integrated into the BALOTS website. Feedback is another venue that is used for disseminating assessment knowledge and practices. Programs receive general feedback about common problems that emerge as BALOTS reports are reviewed.

Purdue is also a member of the Higher Learning Commission’s Academy for Assessment of Student Learning. The academy provides assistance with learning outcomes assessment and opportunities to learn best practices from fellow members.

Addressing the uneven progress in assessment will be a focus area in the coming years. The provision of additional resources, better communication, and integration into existing practices are key strategies for advancement in the future. As described earlier, in an effort to integrate assessment into existing practices, Purdue revised Form 40, which is used for proposing new courses and course revisions. In the new 2009 version, faculty are asked to provide learning outcomes for the courses. Adding an assessment report to the college dean’s annual progress report to the provost is also under consideration.

The Assessment Landscape Today

Overall, Purdue does a good deal of work in assessing the overall student experience, including in the first-year. However, the decentralized nature and lack of coordinated dissemination of these efforts means the campus community has made poor use of the valuable information produced. Additionally, findings suggested that when data and assessment results are available, there is still a lack of actionable steps and data-driven decisions derived from those efforts.

Decentralized Assessment Efforts and Use of Assessment Data

Very good assessment activities occur centrally and de-centrally, but the coordinating unit would enable a more strategic and unified effort for assessment of the first-year experience.

Many departments at Purdue conduct their own assessment efforts, including the Discovery Learning Research Center (DLRC), CIE, OIR, Enrollment Management Analysis and Reporting (EMAR), Student Analytical Research (SAR), the Provost’s Assessment Office, data arms in the Vice President of Student Affairs, SATS, Housing and Food Services, and the academic departments. Data indicates that there is a lot of assessment activity being performed within these programs, but there is also evidence that the findings are not broadly exposed to the campus community. 141

Among Committee members, opinions on assessment performance at Purdue were highly polarized, which is most likely attributed to each member’s access to assessment research and results as well as knowledge about the use of those programs on campus. The evidence on the use of assessment at Purdue showed that individuals who had direct experience with assessment results being used (e.g., CCO, Learning Communities, and STAR) rated the programs higher. However, responses clearly indicate that the majority of the committee did not have that perspective. Additionally, a brief survey of Deans and Department Heads had an extremely low response rate; results for those who responded indicated that several decisions have been based on beliefs within the department rather than research results. For many programs it appears that the assessment that has been done is very outcome- and student-satisfaction-oriented. There is not nearly as much work done on the process for continued improvement.

Dissemination of Assessment Data

The committee felt overall that the University produces a lot of data about the first-year student, but the larger challenge is how faculty and staff receive and process that information. Factors such as ease of access to information can have a significant impact. For instance, a great deal of information is presented at a University level as opposed to a departmental or course level, which might be more meaningful or useful.

140 Evidence Library #99: HLC/NCA Advising Assessment Report; #101: University Advisor Assessment Tool; #339: Data Digest Student Orientation and Learning Communities; #434: Career Counseling Contact Hours; #435: Career Counseling Survey Summary; #436: Career Counseling Survey Presentation; #437: Data Digest Career Counseling Page; #438: Career Counseling Peer Comparison Presentation; #478: Dept Heads Responses to Use of Data; #480: Deans responses to use of Data; #481: Purdue Promise Assessment Plan; #482: Purdue Promise FYE Course Feedback; #483: Purdue Promise FYE Course Evaluation; #485: Purdue Promise Cohort Goals; #486: Purdue Promise FYE Course Pre-Test; #487: Purdue Promise First-Year Evaluation; #488-489: Purdue Promise Academic Coaching Evaluation (and student form); #490: Purdue Promise Mentoring Evaluation; #492: Purdue Promise Signals Intervention; Purdue Promise #493: Sophomore Focus Group; #494-495: Purdue Promise Student Leader Training Pre-Test and Post-Test; #496: Purdue Promise Mentoring Focus Groups; #497-498: Purdue Promise Four-Year Graduation Plan and Presentation; Student Survey Questions: 85, 80, Faculty/Staff Survey Questions: 89, 90, 101, 11. Purdue University.
Additionally, assessment information is often delivered to faculty and staff in the lowest-cost method (i.e., posted on websites), and the effectiveness of that delivery mechanism depends largely on the willingness of individuals to engage in or seek out the data. The Foundations of Excellence Faculty and Staff Survey results clearly demonstrate that there is a split between faculty’s beliefs and administrators’/staff’s beliefs, with faculty consistently rating the University lower on what it assesses, how it disseminates those results, and the use of those results.142

The Committee feels that, overall, what we do for University aggregate data and reporting is very different from what can be done at the individual course level. We have data on a lot of components but do not disseminate it at a unit-record level, possibly because of interpretation of privacy laws (FERPA) or potentially because of the University culture. For instance, Signals has records of unit-level data, but it is currently used in less than 10 percent of courses.143

Understanding of Assessment Data

The fundamental question is that even if attendance at professional meetings, reading of journals, or other efforts is very high, how well is that information being utilized back on campus? Additionally, these efforts are carried out by individuals and appear to rarely impact activities at a unit or institutional level.

Some Committee members wanted to further emphasize that rigorous assessment needs to be implemented for all programs within the University, particularly those making claims for achieving student success.

With such a large number of varied assessments, use, and dissemination of the data, we recommend the creation of an area within the University that focuses on the first-year experience, and that a key component of that area is a department that focuses on assessment overall, and in particular first-year assessment, providing a clear message and direction on assessment. This area would coordinate and organize the priorities related to first-year assessment.

142 Evidence Library #55: Fall 2011 Retention and Graduation Rates; #68: Examination of Four-Year Baccalaureate Completion Rates; #304-305: SON entering class profile (Fall 2009-2011); #306: SON retention data; #336: Data Digest Academic Preparation of New First-Year Students; #337: Data Digest Headcount of New First-Year Students; #358: Data Digest Retention and Graduation Rates of New First-Year Students; #341: Data Digest Enrollment by Age; #342-344: Common Data Set Section B, C, and D; #347: OIR New Beginners Report; #363: Fall Housing Summary; #364: Resident/Nonresident Comparison; #422: Admissions Dashboard; #423: School Profiles, Faculty/Staff Survey Questions; 9, 10. Purdue University.

143 Evidence Library #1: National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE); #4: 2010 Student Importance & Satisfaction Survey; #5: 2011 Graduating Student Learning Outcomes Survey Report; #11-12: Edventures 1 and 2; #339: Data Digest Student Orientation and Learning Communities; #356: BOT Governance Report on Student Success; #364: Resident/Nonresident Comparison, Faculty/Staff Survey Questions: 11, 52, 53, 54. Purdue University.

Recommendations

1. Create a first-year coordinating unit, as part of a broader unit that is focused on the first-year experience, which would coordinate first-year (and broader University) assessment efforts.
   • The unit could be a new department, a repurposing of an existing department, or a task force of existing departments. The key is that the unit be empowered to coordinate the current disparate assessment practices.
   • The unit would meet periodically with an advisory board of faculty and representatives from key offices (SATS, OIR, Housing and Food Services, Enrollment Management, Office of the Dean of Students, Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs).
   • The unit would discuss what research needs to be done regarding the first-year experience, decide what information needs to go on the master repository website, and what information should be in the annual first-year report.
   • One of the first tasks would include meeting with key faculty members to discuss what information, data, and metrics they need in regards to the first-year experience, and what data they need specifically at the course level.
   • The unit would be tasked with meeting with and coordinating the efforts of the assessment units that are currently embedded in various administrative and academic departments. This would allow for dissemination of results throughout the University, and allow for units to be involved in the discussion of what changes should be implemented based on the results. This would also allow for a closing of the loop on how we use data to make improvements on campus, thus helping to develop a culture of improvement based on evidence throughout the University. It would allow for a coordination of efforts and an elimination of redundancy of items that we don’t use, such as the number of survey efforts conducted on campus.
   • The unit would need to immediately link to the faculty advisory board that is currently in discussions with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) about the current IRB process at Purdue. This would allow for a discussion to occur with the IRB regarding at what point the review board should be involved in campus internal assessment efforts to ensure that said efforts are not delayed by moving through the IRB process.
2. Develop a four-pronged approach to disseminating assessment results.
   • Create a website to serve as a master repository of assessment information on the first-year experience. The site would not just be a place for data and results, it would also gather current instruments and information about assessment efforts on campus to allow others to view and use the resources.
   • Implementing the Student Voice Web platform. Student Voice allows for a single point of secure storing for assessment data as well as provides a portal for faculty and staff to access the information. The creation of the master repository would need to be a collaborative effort among multiple offices (OIR, SAR, Enrollment Management, Housing and Food Services, EMAR, SATS, Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, academic units). By linking to the Student Voice platform the site would have a database capability that would allow Purdue members to search and manipulate data from first-year assessment efforts. Ideally the master site would also allow for better targeted messaging to specific constituencies on campus (faculty, advisors, students, etc.), be mobile device accessible and allow for mobile applications that would list available services and remind students of important events during the first year.
   • Distribute an annual print publication of the first-year experience on campus (including assessment results) to all faculty and staff, and potentially mailed to home addresses. The publication should be a professional glossy publication of the University’s efforts.
   • Create a subscriber-based email function that would allow individuals to opt into periodic messaging on research, workshops, webinars, and training. It should be built with the ability to link to social media such as Facebook.
   • Make course-level data accessible through an infrastructure that allows for delivery of key course metrics (e.g., distribution of majors, academic preparation, student demographics) to faculty members teaching the course. Ideally these metrics would be made accessible via the “Faculty Tab” in MyPurdue for all faculty.
   • The maintenance of these efforts would be within the purview of the first-year coordinating unit (Recommendation 1). Given the scope of the coordinated communication plan, it could be staged in its roll-out with the website being an early focus.

3. Establish a set of research studies on the first-year experience/student success.
   • The Provost’s Office will establish a set of research studies that are carried out on a regular basis and are focused on the first-year experience and student success. The coordinating unit (Recommendation 1) will work with the existing assessment offices and interested faculty to conduct the research series. This research will ultimately provide a set of useful longitudinal data on student success at Purdue. The research should range from individual course level to the overall University level, encompassing both outcomes assessment as well as socio/attitudinal assessment, including a mechanism that allows for capturing student perspectives of the first-year experience. Some examples of initial research that should be examined include:
   • An examination of what predicts student success in courses. This effort needs to consider social cognitive factors beyond the traditional academic preparation metrics that have been examined in the past. An example of these efforts can be found in First Year Engineering’s Student Attitudinal Success Instrument (SASI) efforts. These additional metrics then need to be part of the distribution of course-level data to faculty.
   • An examination of the relationship between students’ use of time in certain activities (e.g., attendance, studying, socializing, social media, etc.) and student success. Some data on students’ use of time already exists in Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), NSSE, and the Foundations of Excellence surveys, but those results need to be correlated with student success.
   • A master effort across the University examining exactly what the first-year student experience is, conducted with only first-year students, similar to the Your First College Year (YFCY) survey. Currently the University does not have a regular and ongoing assessment of the students’ first-year experience.

4. Endorse a consistent assessment message. There must be explicit administrative support of the assessment message from the President, Provost, and Deans to create a consistent and sustained messaging effort at Purdue. An example would be a monthly report, of which the first page would be high-level University metrics that the President’s and Provost’s offices feel are important for the University to be tracking in regard to student success, with the remainder of the document being Academic School- or College-specific information. The deans could present this data/assessment/report with their department chairs and gather feedback on what information is relevant, needed, and useful, and decisions can be made on what improvements are necessitated. This top-down effort would help promote a culture of improvement based on evidence at the University.

5. Present an institutional assessment forum/workshop at least annually, if not every semester, to allow individuals who conduct research and assessment efforts on the first-year experience and student success to present and discuss their work with colleagues at the institution. This would allow both for a presentation of the work being conducted on campus and time for individuals that are doing similar work in different areas on campus to meet, discuss, and collaborate on their efforts. This would enhance assessment knowledge and skills, and promote a culture of assessment. Additionally, campus initiatives to improve student success could be discussed (e.g., current IMPACT efforts, Supplemental Instruction, etc.).

6. Establish a culture of improvement based on evidence tied to job responsibilities. A method to allow for this is to endorse the engagement in and use of assessment data as an integral part of every staff and faculty member’s job responsibilities and annual departmental reviews. These efforts by faculty/staff should be reflected in the annual job performance evaluation process as well as the departmental budget discussions.
It is clear that the campus community is deeply committed to the goals of Purdue’s strategic plan, including the success of our undergraduate students. Just as our strategic plan provides a roadmap for the future of our University, the Foundations of Excellence Steering Committee believes that the recommendation and responsibilities in this report pave the way for a new campus culture.

By building on Purdue’s existing strengths we will transform our culture into one that views undergraduate experiences holistically, fully integrating excellent programs. In this campus environment, we will form intentional links between student learning both in and out of the classroom, provide the opportunity for students to develop their competency, and help them achieve confidence through practice.

By addressing the unique needs of a diverse campus community, we will enhance learning, create a solid foundation for personal and professional development, and build connections between entering students and the institution. As a result, our students can achieve academic and personal success and become contributing members of society.

CONCLUSION

Submitted May 3, 2012
by
A.D. Whittaker, M. Exum, B. McCuskey, G.C. Taylor

Vision
Achieve a new campus culture focused on excellent, intentional, and integrated curricular and co-curricular efforts for all students, according to their specific needs, so that they can achieve academic and personal success.

Approach
In order to implement the sweeping action recommended by the Foundations of Excellence report, the four divisions of Academic Affairs, Housing and Food Services, Student Affairs, and Diversity and Inclusion recommend the appointment of a “designated worrier” to lead an implementation team focused on operationalizing the Foundations of Excellence recommendations. We propose a plan to develop a substantive, three-year project. At three years, there will be a complete assessment to determine the effectiveness of the current organizational structure and make an evidence-based recommendation to the Provost of any needed changes.

We believe the strengths of this model are that:

1. It aligns established resources in new ways — promoting a focus on student transitions and success — but does not create a new organizational unit.
2. It will be designed with established metrics and evaluated annually to determine effectiveness.
3. It continues the existing executive leadership as the program unfolds.

Organizational Structure

Executive Committee:
1. Membership: Senior administrators of the key, University-wide divisions impacting undergraduate student success (Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Housing and Food Services, Diversity and Inclusion). The committee will report to the Provost.
   a. Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs — Dale Whittaker
   b. Vice President for Student Affairs — Melissa Exum
   c. Associate Vice President for Housing and Food Services — Beth McCuskey
   d. Vice Provost for Diversity and Inclusion — Christine Taylor
2. Role: Remove barriers between division units, redirect necessary resources within and among divisions to accomplish joint goals, designate division leadership tasked with operationalizing the Foundations of Excellence recommendations, and set/approve annual goals for the Foundations of Excellence implementation team based on assessment evidence.

Improvement Team:
1. Membership: Brent Drake (lead), Diane Beaudoin (learning outcomes lead), and current membership of Foundations of Excellence Improvement Dimension. Responsible to the Executive Committee.
2. Role: Design the goals and metrics by which progress of implementation will be measured, assess degree of implementation of Foundations of Excellence recommendations, assess student success as defined by Foundations of Excellence, identify success gaps specific to groups of students, and execute other recommendations of the Improvement Dimension Committee recommendations.

Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs (NEW POSITION):
1. Membership: Existing Purdue faculty member. FY, 0.9-0.6 FTE, three-year term administrative appointment. Continuation possible based on need and measurable success. Reports to Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs. Responsible to Executive Committee.
2. Role: Operationalize Foundations of Excellence recommendations in a manner that spans organizational boundaries. Provide leadership to the Foundations of Excellence Implementation Team. Develop annual action plans and ensure their implementation. Serve as spokesperson for academic success and communicate progress. Be responsible for coordinating success functions across campus (academic and co-curricular).
3. NOTE: We recommend a rapid, internal search with Foundations of Excellence Steering Committee serving as the search committee.
Implementation Team:

1. **Membership:** A five-person, inter-division team will be designated by their division administrators to collaboratively lead implementation of Foundations of Excellence recommendations (no less than 0.45 FTE per position description change), and lead change within their home divisions for a three-year period.

   a. Director of Student Access, Transition, and Success Programs — Jared Tippets (Academic Affairs)
   b. Director of Undergraduate Studies Program — Sue Aufderheide (Academic Affairs)
   c. Director of Leadership Engagement — Harry Brown (Student Affairs)
   d. Director of Academic Initiatives — Julie Talz (Housing and Food Services)
   e. Director of Undergraduate Advising — Position to be created (Academic Affairs)

2. **Role:** Members report directly to their division administrators with functional reporting for Foundations of Excellence to the Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs. For the duration of their membership on the implementation team, their performance will be based on:

   a. Accomplishing Foundations of Excellence metrics
   b. Quality of collaboration
   c. Leadership of change within their respective units
FOUNDATIONS OF EXCELLENCE